



The Ancient Roots of Spiritual Alchemy

How the Alchemists Meditated

Dennis William Hauck

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by Dennis William Hauck

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Part I – Lost Wisdom and Scholarly Debates

Spiritus in Alchemy

The question of how to interpret alchemical writings harkens back to the roots of alchemy in ancient Egypt and China, and it continues to be debated to this day. Is alchemy a spiritual technology designed to accelerate human evolution? Is it a psychological discipline – a kind of mental alchemy – intended to help people achieve personal integration and transformation? Or is alchemy simply the precursor of modern chemistry – a random collection of metallurgical and chemical discoveries? Or could it be all the above?

The answer might be found in the work of Mike Zuber, a Swiss scholar who is currently a Research Fellow in the Institute for Advanced Studies in the Humanities at the University of Queensland, Australia. He received his doctorate at the University of Amsterdam in 2017 and pursued his postdoctoral research at the University of Oxford.

Zuber challenges the view that alchemy was just a pseudoscientific precursor to chemistry and argues against the academic view that spiritual alchemy is a modern phenomenon originating in the mid-eighteenth century. His work emphasizes the spiritual aspects of the Great Work, which have been minimized by some academics in the history of science.

“The predominant focus on the scientific aspect of alchemy, such as laboratory experiment, practical techniques, and material ingredients,” argues Zuber, “marginalizes the things that render alchemy so fascinating: its rich and vivid imagery, reliance on the medium of manuscript, and complicated relationship with spirituality and religion.”

Using previously unstudied manuscripts, Zuber wrote the first full-length, academically accurate account of spiritual alchemy in its historical context. In that book, entitled *Spiritual Alchemy: From Jacob Boehme to Mary Anne Atwood* (2021), Zuber also reveals an important clue at the heart of all forms of alchemy that can unify them as one discipline:¹

“Spiritual alchemy was based on the early-modern concepts of *spiritus*,” wrote Zuber, “a subtle matter pervading the universe. As a concept, *spiritus* transitions freely between laboratory alchemy, medicine, cosmology, and even theology. In the process, it could give rise to heterodox implications, something that also affected the development of spiritual alchemy. The concept of *spiritus* as subtle matter brings together science and religion in a way that challenges our habit of distinguishing sharply between the two disciplines.”

¹ Zuber, Mike A. *Spiritual Alchemy: From Jacob Boehme to Mary Anne Atwood*. Oxford University Press (2021), ISBN 978-0190073046. Oxford Studies in Western Esotericism.

Zuber points out that during the 16th century, the idea of inner spiritual rebirth came to be thought as an alchemical process different from the baptism rituals of the Church, just as the Eucharist came to be thought of as a semi-physical spiritual substance (or *spiritus*) that could actually be consumed:

“The theological and intellectual developments of the Reformation allowed the concept of rebirth to emerge as something distinct from baptism – rebirth came to be strongly associated with alchemy,” Zuber argues. “Drawing on the legacy of Paracelsus, the spiritualist theologies of the German physician and theologian Caspar Schwenckfeld (1489-1561) and German philosopher Valentin Weigel (1533-1588) sharply contrasted inward rebirth with the outward ritual of baptism. They posited rebirth as an alternative account of how believers could attain salvation. Also, pseudepigraphic texts attributed to Weigel closely associated this understanding of rebirth with alchemy by the late 16th century.”

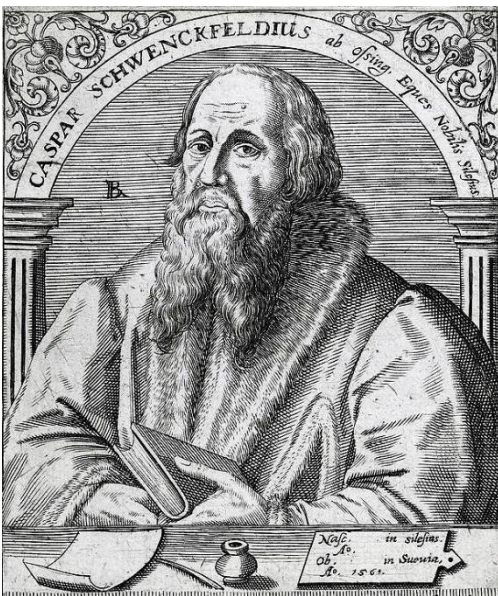


Figure 1. Engraving of Caspar Schwenckfeld.

The idea of *spiritus* as an alchemical spiritual substance was implicit in the teachings of Caspar Schwenckfeld. He advocated “a more spiritual church” in which one could know Christ without books or scripture, and he emphasized that for one to be a true Christian, one must not only transform outwardly but also inwardly. His followers strived to become “true believers” who learned how to “consume” the *spiritus* or subtle spiritual body of Christ.

Through this kind of concrete communion or “true Eucharist,” the believer underwent a psychospiritual regeneration by divine grace through the inner workings of Christ’s *spiritus*.

Schwenckfeld demanded his followers give actual

evidence of their physical and spiritual regeneration. His radical views prompted Martin Luther to publish his treatise *The Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ – Against the Fanatics* in 1526.

Valentin Weigel (1533-1588) was a mystical writer heavily influenced by the alchemical ideas of Paracelsus. He believed the true meaning of the Great Work was the spiritual rebirth of the alchemist in a body of light. His intellectual heritage can be seen in the writings of Jakob Boehme, Robert Fludd and George Rapp, and many other 17th century alchemists and Rosicrucian mystics. Weigel was instrumental in the transition to the modern tradition of spiritual alchemy.

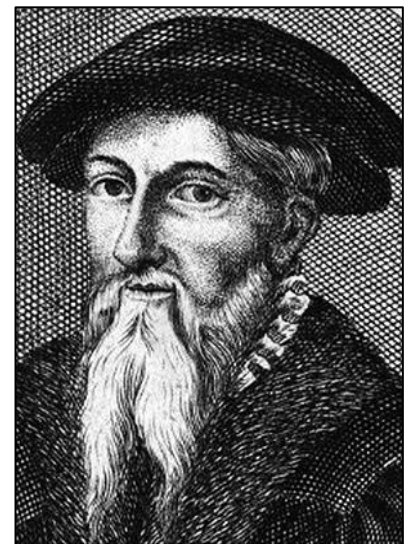


Figure 2. Drawing of Valentin Weigel.

Was the concept of *spiritus* as a spiritual substance between Heaven and Earth the “One Thing” that Hermes describes in the *Emerald Tablet*? The fact is that alchemists through the centuries developed the concept of *spiritus* and came to realize that alchemy was about much more than just chemistry.

The brilliant research of Swiss psychologists Herbert Silberer and Carl Jung, as well as the Romanian historian of religion Mircea Eliade, established alchemy as a spiritual discipline, although their work has been challenged in recent years by literalistic materialist academics like William Newman of Indiana University and Lawrence Principe of Johns Hopkins.

Other scholars, such as British historian of science Eric J. Holmyard (1891-1959) and Swiss scholar Marie-Louise von Franz (1915-1998), believe the spiritual and practical aspects of alchemy should be viewed as complimentary methods of esoteric (inner or soulful) and exoteric (outer or material) perfection – sometimes used simultaneously in the Great Work.²

Italian philosopher and researcher into the worldwide development of alchemy, Michela Pereira (born 1948), argues that, at their beginning, all forms of alchemy are linked to the spiritual tradition of rebirth in the culture in which they originated. For example, Western alchemy was primarily a spiritual or sacred art at its roots in China and Egypt.

“Alchemy is the quest for an agent of material perfection,” explained Pereira, “produced through a creative activity (the *Magnum Opus* or Great Work), in which humans and Nature collaborate. It exists in many cultures under different specifications (in China, India, Islam; and in the Western world since Hellenistic times). Because of its purpose, however, the alchemists' quest is always *strictly linked to the religious doctrine of redemption* current in each civilization where alchemy is practiced. In the Western world, alchemy presented itself at its advent as a *sacred art*.”³

Two Kinds of Alchemy

George Florin Calian is a Romanian historian of ancient philosophy and is currently a faculty member at the Institute for Ecumenical Research at Lucian Blaga University. He graduated from the University of Bucharest with an MA in Greek-Roman History, and he received another MA in Medieval Studies and his doctoral degree from Central European University.

In his article, “Some Modern Controversies on the Historiography of Alchemy,” in the *Annual of Medieval Studies* (2010), Calian summarized the continuing problem with understanding the symbology of alchemy:

² Holmyard, Eric John (1957). *Alchemy*. Courier Dover Publications. ISBN 978-0-486-26298-7; von Franz, Marie Louise (1997). *Alchemical Active Imagination*. Boston: Shambhala Publications. ISBN 978-0-87773-589-2.

³ Pereira, Michela (2018). “Alchemy”. In Craig, Edward (ed.). *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Routledge. Doi: 10.4324/9780415249126-Q001-1. ISBN 978-0-415-25069-6.

“The accent on the scientific and empirical character of alchemy, especially from the field of the history of science, promotes the idea that one can understand the cryptic and metaphorical language of alchemy mainly through the laboratory chemical practice. As a result, the tendency is to interpret the spiritual and esoteric language of alchemy as metaphors for laboratory work. Furthermore, the most representative modern research on historiography of alchemy point to the spiritual character of alchemy as being contaminated by esoteric sciences and Victorian occultism.”⁴

There are modern academics in the history of science who insist that spiritual alchemy and the idea of alchemy for personal transformation did not exist prior to Jacob Boehme in the 17th century. In other words, all alchemy practiced before the late 17th century was supposedly only concerned with practical, metallurgical, and chemical pursuits. This is a ludicrous idea that is easily disproved just by reading the writings of the ancient alchemists and studying their drawings with an open mind.

So, exactly what is spiritual alchemy and how has it been practiced down through the centuries? Spiritual alchemy can be defined as the meditative practice of inner purification and transformation that leads to the healing and liberation of an inner essence or soul in a person. There follows a process of transmutation (or transubstantiation) in which the individual soul unites with the One Soul of the cosmos or returns to its original form (or “First Matter”).

The aspects of spiritual alchemy include:

- ***Observing yourself.*** Identifying and empowering your authentic thoughts and emotions from those you've been conditioned to think and feel. Understanding the difference between your lesser physical “self” and your greater spiritual “Self.”
- ***Breaking down the ego.*** Realizing that individual pride and stubborn egoic attachments to the everyday world are the major stumbling blocks to achieving the goals of spiritual alchemy.
- ***Creating an Inner Laboratory.*** Establishing a safe and quiet inner space to test visualizations and perform thought experiments.
- ***Developing the Spiritus Substance.*** Developing this “First Matter” of the soul, an amorphous subtle matter we are defining as the psychospiritual substance “*Spiritus*.”

Now let’s take a look at a few alchemists who practiced spiritual or psychological alchemy through the ages and examine their methods of prayer and meditation more closely. . .

⁴ Calian, Florin George (2010). “Alkimia Operativa and Alkimia Speculativa. Some Modern Controversies on the Historiography of Alchemy.” *Annual of Medieval Studies at CEU* 16:166-190.

Part II – A Historiography of Spiritual Alchemy

Indian Alchemy

Indian alchemy developed in a variety of paths from religions that had their roots in the Indian subcontinent. These so-called “Dharmic religions” include Buddhism, Hinduism, Jainism, Sikhism, and some smaller religious communities. As early as 2000 BCE, Hindu Vedic texts (written in an ancient Sanskrit language) spoke of a symbolic connection between gold and eternal life, and by the 3rd century CE, Indian alchemists were developing methods for the transmutation of base elements into gold.

Siddha Alchemy developed in medieval India from the ancient teachings of Tantric Alchemy. Siddhas practiced a combination of techniques from alchemy, hatha yoga, and tantra in an effort to achieve longevity and spiritual perfection. The Sanskrit term “siddha” refers to any of a group of godlike humans who carry a “divine spark of light” and tend to live isolated lives in the mountains. Siddha medicine originated in South India and is one of India’s oldest systems of healing. It is based on alchemy, mysticism, and spiritual disciplines, including deep and prolonged meditations on patient cures.

According to the Siddha tradition, practitioners of Siddha alchemy fall into four main groups:

- 1) **Kaula Siddhas** seek physical immortality through mystically erotic practices.
- 2) **Rasa Siddhas** seek physical immortality by consuming the mineral or herbal equivalents of the sexual fluids of the god Shiva and his consort Devi.
- 3) **Nath Siddhas** combine the laboratory and sexual practices of Kaula and Rasa traditions.
- 4) **Tamil Siddhas** follow the teachings of the 8th-century Shaivite mystic Tirumūlar, whose book *Tirumantiram* describes how to awaken *kuṇḍalinī* (or the “serpent power”) in the body and unite with Shiva to attain immortality in a spirit body.

In the 11th century, the Persian alchemist al-Biruni, (973-1050 CE) reported that the Indians had developed an advanced secret alchemy known in Sanskrit as “*Rasayana*” (literally, the art of obtaining the etheric substance *Rasa*, which means “mercury, nectar, or essential substance.”) This seems to parallel the development of the Western idea of *spiritus*.

The goal of most forms of Indian alchemy is to create a divine body (the subtle body or “*Divya-Deham*” in Sanskrit) and obtain immortality while still in a human body. Indian alchemical texts are a strange mixture of practical-spiritual methods of manipulating the physical elements mercury and sulfur, while combining them with the spiritized essences symbolized by the “semen of the god Śhiva” and the “menstrual blood of the goddess Devī.”⁵

⁵ White, David Gordon. *The Alchemical Body: Siddha Traditions in Medieval India* (1996) ; White, David Gordon (2011). *Rasāyana (Alchemy)*, Oxford Bibliographies Online. Oxford University Press. doi:10.1093/OBO/9780195399318-0046.

Unfortunately, the content of over 700 ancient Sanskrit treatises on both spiritual and practical alchemy have not yet been fully integrated into the global history of alchemy, and Western historians often ignore Indian alchemical literature.

Chinese Alchemy

In recent years it has become clear that alchemy is not simply a product of Western culture. Ancient influences in both spiritual and practical alchemy from the Far East are evident in the Hellenistic and Islamic alchemical traditions. Cultural exchange between Asia, Europe, Arabia, and northern Africa on the Silk Road began during the Han Dynasty (206 BCE–220 CE).⁶

Chinese alchemists developed an unbroken tradition of spiritual alchemy that began sometime between 1000 BCE and 500 BCE, yet Western scholars also often ignore this ancient and deeply spiritual discipline. Chinese alchemy was based on meditation, and Chinese alchemists taught a new kind of internal alchemy that required focused concentration and the achievement of specific states of consciousness. Their goal was to connect to the cosmic substance of *spiritus* and incarnate it in the human body for spiritual transformation.

One common term for alchemy in China was *Jindan* (or “Golden Elixir”), which referred to both its use externally as a tonic to heal the body and internally as a purified consciousness to empower the soul. The Golden Elixir was also referred to as the “golden light” seen in the mind during meditation. As in the West, mercury was a symbol for this light of consciousness, so not surprisingly, *Jindan* also referred to the red crystalline ore cinnabar (mercury sulfide) from which pure glistening mercury metal was obtained.

Ge Hong

Ge Hong (283–343 CE) was an alchemist and physician who practiced during the Jin Dynasty in China. He wrote several important books, including his widely circulated book *Baopuzi*, which literally means to “embrace simplicity and core qualities, and remain untempted by material desires.”

Baopuzi contains “Outer Chapters” about practical alchemy and making medicines, as well as “Inner Chapters” devoted to spiritual alchemy and meditative techniques for achieving *Hsien*, which means “transcendence of the material state – or immortality.”

⁶ Joseph Needham. *Science and Civilization in China*. Cambridge University Press. Five volumes. 1954–2008. Volume 3.



Figure 3. Chinese watercolor of Ge Hong.

Ge Hong's "Internal Alchemy" consists of meditation and "extracorporeal" visualizations intended to create an immortal body of light within the alchemist's physical body. Ge Hong's methods include physiological, respiratory, and dietary practices to aid in creating the transcendental state.

Ge Hong researched ancient Chinese texts on spiritual alchemy and found three he recommended (*Scripture of Great Clarity*, *Scripture of the Nine Elixirs*, and *Scripture of the Golden Liquor*). Ge Hong declared that alchemical meditation was the only spiritual practice that led to transcendence of the body and immortality.⁷

In his treatise *Inner Chapters of the Book of the Master Who Embraces Spontaneous Nature* (317 CE), Hong noted that the spiritized elixirs prepared by alchemists were better than any produced by traditional Chinese medicine because of the additional protection on the spiritual level that they could provide.⁸

In 499 CE – 135 years after the death of Ge Hong – the alchemist Tao Hongjing (456–536 CE) attacked the *Scripture of the Nine Elixirs* as "spiritually unfulfilling" and also taught that alchemical meditation was not as strong as traditional (or Shangqing) meditation techniques. While Hongjing did not deny the power of alchemical elixirs to provide divine protection, the emphasis on alchemical meditation in Chinese alchemy continued to decline in the centuries after Ge Hong's death.⁹

***Neidan* Meditation Techniques**

By the early 8th century, however, the internal alchemy envisioned by Ge Hong morphed into a "new alchemy" called *Neidan* that became an official part of the Chinese alchemical tradition. Practitioners of *Neidan* emphasized alchemical meditation over external remedies and worked psychologically with archetypes called "inner gods." The inner gods are not present physically but instead act like mindful intelligences assigned to different organs and parts of the body.

⁷ Pregadio, Fabrizio (2006). *Great Clarity: Daoism and Alchemy in Early Medieval China*. Stanford University Press. pp. 3-6. ISBN 978-0-8047-6773-6.

⁸ Pregadio, Fabrizio (2021). "The Alchemical Body in Daoism." *Journal of Daoist Studies*. 14 (14): 99–127:10.1353/dao.2021.0003. ISSN 1941-5524. S2CID 228176118.

⁹ Pregadio, Fabrizio (2006). *Great Clarity: Daoism and Alchemy in Early Medieval China*. Stanford University Press. p. 142. ISBN 978-0-8047-6773-6.

A practitioner could become immortal if the eternal substance (or *spiritus*) of an inner could be manifested in meditation.¹⁰

In general, *Neidan* meditations consist of composed relaxation techniques, visualizations, breathing, and bodily postures. The meditations cultivate three subtle substances or elixirs in the body known as the “Three Treasures” that accumulate in three inner “cauldrons” or “elixir fields” known as “*Tan Tien*s.”

The first Treasure is *Jing* (or *Ching*, the Soul or “life essence”), which is preserved – with breathing exercises and correct diet – in the Lower *Tan Tien* (at the navel level). The second Treasure is *Qi* (or *Chi*, “vital energy flow in the Breath”), which is improved by correct posture and energy from the interacting opposites of *Yin* and *Yang* in the Middle *Tan Tien* (at the heart level). The third Treasure is *Shen* (Spirit or “mental energy”), which is the source of creativity emanating from the Upper *Tan Tien* (at the brain level) – a key force in spiritual alchemy. The Three Treasures are cultivated and united to refine emotional, vital, and mental energies in preparation for the ultimate return to the primordial unity of the *Tao* (or the One).

How Tibetan Taoists Meditate

According to Taoist alchemists in the Tibetan tradition, although we cannot directly know the *Tao*, we can experience it in meditation if we are fully relaxed in a state of pure awareness. It can also be experienced by observing the flow of life in Nature in a relaxed and receptive state known as *wu wei* (“inaction” or ambitionless non-exertion). For Taoists, being fully relaxed and natural is equated with being real in the world – an achievement they call *ziran*.

Taoist alchemists search for the *Tao* in the moment it emerges from the *wuji* (“the Void without extremities or extensions”) – the ultimate emptiness symbolized by the open circle in the diagram below. Try to feel the endless emptiness deep in the open circle.



Figure 4. Diagram of the three stages of experiencing the *Tao* as it emerges from the background reality in Nature.

¹⁰ Pregadio, Fabrizio (2021). “The Alchemical Body in Daoism”. *Journal of Daoist Studies*. 14 (14): 99–127:10.1353/dao.2021.0003. ISSN 1941-5524. S2CID 228176118.

From a single point, the explosive power of the *Taiji* (the “Supreme Ultimate” or Monad) is depicted in the center diagram as a swirling spiral suddenly emerging out of nothingness from a single point. Stare at the dot in the center of the spiral and try to feel the emerging ordering principle not only at the beginning of time but also as a creative principle still active in the world. This is the monadic space from which reality emerges.

Finally, the *Taiji* Monad emanates the duality of the created world depicted in the *Taijitu* (the “Ultimate Power”) symbol at right. The familiar *Taijitu* symbol (also known as the *Taichi*) expresses the dualistic dynamic of the *logos* in the world. It symbolizes the singularity of universal consciousness now grounded in the universe.

Yang is the aggressive solar or masculine part of duality associated with infinite light and spirit. *Yin* is the passive lunar or feminine part of duality associated with the dark mystery of soul and manifestation. Each part contains the seed of the other and they constantly change into each other in an ouroboric dance of eternal creation and destruction.

Unfortunately, many Western scholars ignore the roots of spiritual alchemy in the Chinese tradition. Incredibly, knowledge of Chinese alchemy by Western scholars was not recognized academically until 1928 with the publication of *A Study of Chinese Alchemy* by Obed Simon Johnson, Ph.D. (University of California, Berkeley). In his book, Johnson described the psychospiritual techniques of Chinese alchemy and their view of the elixir. With considerable evidence, he attributed the birth of alchemy to ancient China, 500 years *before* the rise of Greco-Egyptian alchemy.¹¹

The Alexandrian Era

Alexandria was the capital of Egypt for almost a thousand years—from its founding by Alexander the Great in 332 BCE until its surrender to Arab forces in 642 CE. The city had a peak population of 500,000 people, and its Great Library and associated academy were the center of civilization in the ancient world. Alexandria was a melting pot of ideas from Platonism, Pythagoreanism, Stoicism, and Gnosticism, as well as Egyptian religion, Judaism, and emerging Christianity—all of which influenced the development of Western alchemy. Greek alchemists in Alexandria referred to their craft as “the Art”, which was often characterized as a spiritual, divine, or mystical pursuit. This is, incidentally, at about 2,000 years before some American academics say spiritual alchemy existed.¹²

¹¹ Obed Simon Johnson, *A Study of Chinese Alchemy*, Shanghai, Commercial Publishers, 1928. Also New York, Arno Publishing, 1974.

¹² Keyser, Paul T. (1990). “Alchemy in the Ancient World: From Science to Magic”. *Illinois Classical Studies*. **15** (2): 353–378. hdl:2142/12197. ISSN 0363-1923.

Bolus of Mendes

Bolus of Mendes was a 3rd century BCE philosopher-chemist who wrote from both the esoteric and practical viewpoints, and some scholars have traced the beginning of the Hermetic tradition to him. Bolus' book *On Sympathies and Antipathies* was a mix of magic and pharmacology. He also wrote a book titled *On Marvels* about the paradoxical wonders of Nature, physiology, and human culture. Another of his books, *The Medical Art*, contained both natural and artificial remedies. Bolus also wrote about astronomical phenomena, although only fragments of his other works survive. It is believed that Bolus was a Hellenized Egyptian who was a follower of the pre-Socratic Greek philosopher Democritus. In fact, some of his books were later attributed to Democritus, and Bolus became known as the "Pseudo-Democritus."

Marcus Aurelius

The Roman emperor Marcus Aurelius (121-180 CE) visited Alexandria in 176 CE to meet with philosophers and alchemists connected with the Great Library there. While he was in Alexandria, he was also initiated into the Eleusinian Mysteries, the Greek esoteric religious cult.

Aurelius accepted the view of Alexandrian alchemists (and the principles of Stoic physics) that immanent in the material universe is a spiritual substance (*spiritus*) that manifests in many forms such as the elements, mind, soul, physical objects, etc.

Aurelius believed the divine mind or raw *logos* imprinted in Nature was the source of the universal "Good" that could be accessed and studied only in natural surroundings. In his private journals, Aurelius developed a system of mental discipline to enable himself to align with the universal "Good" or cosmic purpose.

Aurelius' instructions for his unique kind of "natural meditation" can be found in his book *Meditations*, which he wrote in 167 CE. The following is a cursory summary of the basic instructions, mostly in his own words:

"You have the power to strip away any superfluous troubles located wholly in your judgement and to possess a large room for yourself embracing in thought the whole cosmos – to consider everlasting time, to think of the rapid change in the parts of each thing, of how short it is from birth until dissolution, and how the Void before birth and the Void after dissolution are equally infinite. Compared to eternity, all things are diminutive, subject to change and decay, yet all things proceed from the One Intelligent Cause."

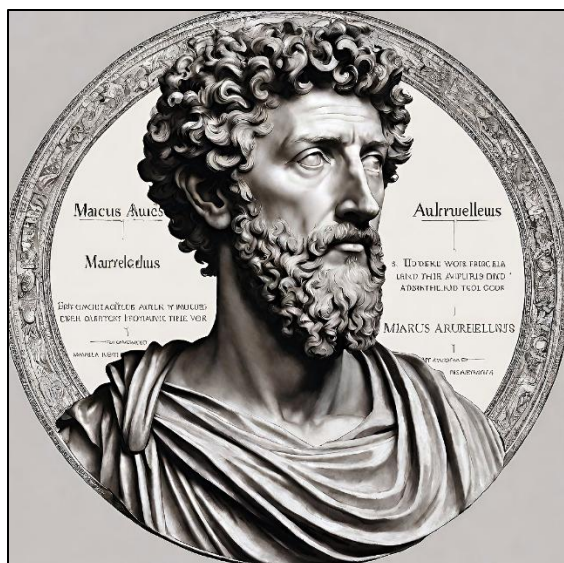


Figure 5. Roman Emperor Marcus Aurelius.

Try to witness the cosmic reality being expressed in the created world by unifying your mind with the divine perspective as the experience unfolds. Just relax into the world and witness it as it is. Try to view the whole process as coming not from you but unfolding from the Mind hidden in Nature, what Aurelius called the “One Intelligent Cause.”

You can experience this reality directly by accepting it without adding any interpretations or personal value judgments, including basic assumptions such as the value of the subject before you. “Do not say more to yourself than the first impressions report,” Aurelius cautions. “Abide always by the first impressions and add nothing of your own from within.”

You must build personal integrity to align with Nature’s purpose. “If it is not right, do not do it,” Aurelius says. “If it is not true, do not say it.” His advice if you encounter any mental blockages to experiencing the greater reality: “The mind adapts and converts to its own purposes whatever obstacle to our acting challenges us. The impediment to action advances action. What stands in the way becomes the way.” In other words, where you find resistance is the way forward; the challenge you feel holds the key to deeper experience.

Zosimos

Zosimos of Panopolis (circa 300 CE) was an Alexandrian alchemist who wrote one of the first books on alchemy, *Cheirokmeta* (Greek for “Handmade Things”). He defined alchemy as the “study of the composition of waters, movement, growth, embodying and disembodying, drawing the spirits from bodies and bonding spirits within bodies.”

Zosimos made significant breakthroughs in distillation and tincturing techniques, and he was also the first to identify the existence of two branches of alchemy. Practical or “profane” alchemy involved metallurgy and chemistry and sought knowledge of the material world. The other was spiritual alchemy that involved psychic transformations and the salvation of the soul that sought a kind of inner spiritual baptism or sacred marriage between the divine and the alchemist.

In his treatise, *Concerning the True Book of Sophe, the Egyptian, and of the Divine Master of the Hebrews and the Sabaoth Powers*, Zosimos wrote:

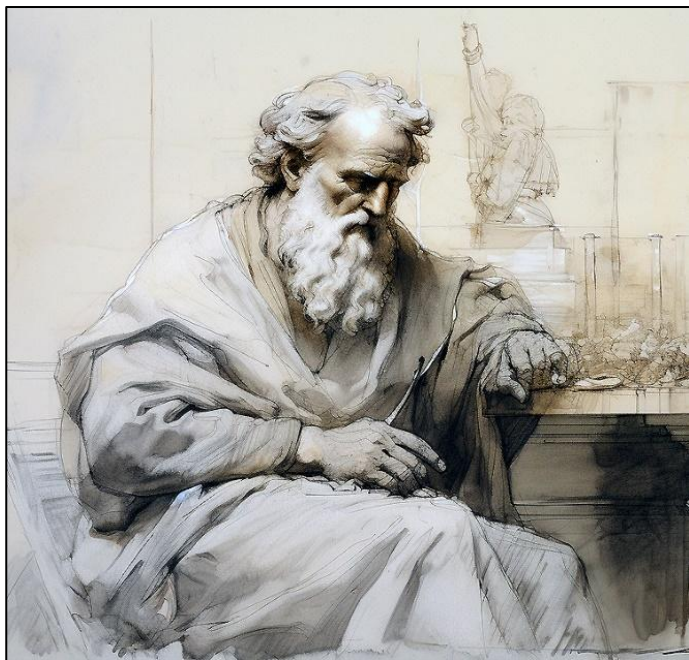


Figure 6. Drawing of Zosimos of Panopolis.

"There are two sciences and two wisdoms, that of the Egyptians and that of the Hebrews, which latter is confirmed by divine justice. The science and wisdom of the most excellent dominate the one and the other. Both originate in olden times. Their origin is without a king, autonomous and immaterial; it is not concerned with material and corruptible bodies, it operates, without submitting to strange influences, supported by prayer and divine grace.

"The symbol of chemistry is drawn from the creation by its adepts, who cleanse and save the divine soul bound in the elements, and who free the divine spirit from its mixture with the flesh. As the Sun is, so to speak, a flower of the fire and (simultaneously) the

heavenly Sun, the right eye of the world – so copper when it blooms – that is when it takes the color of gold, through purification – becomes a terrestrial sun, which is king of the earth, as the sun is king of heaven."¹³

Zosimos was a Gnostic who believed practical alchemy was given to women when the fallen angels (or "Titans") lusted after them as described in the Book of Enoch. According to Gnostic teachings, archetypal demons known as the Archons maintained the enslavement of fallen human beings by tricking the spiritual aspect of humanity (known as the "Luminous Man," symbolized by Adam among the Hebrews or Thoth among the Egyptians) into believing he had no soul and was completely defined by the four material elements (Water, Earth, Air, and Fire). Thus, the original light of Luminous Man was divided and hidden away in material bodies.

The Archons jealously guarded their secret and revealed it only to corrupt priests who worshipped them and fed them with human sacrifices. It was the sacred duty of spiritual alchemists to free the Luminous Man hidden in each of us from the bonds of matter and the fateful control of the Archons. Only by working in the darkness of material substances (and the subconscious mind) could the alchemist liberate the original spark of light trapped within and cause its regeneration.

¹³ Carl Gustav Jung; Elizabeth Welsh; Barbara Hannah in *Modern Psychology*. November 1940-July 1941: Alchemy, vol. 1-2. University of California: K. Schipper & Co. pp. 44-45. 1960.

Zosimos believed King Solomon was a Magus or alchemist who held dominion over the Archons, and Jesus Christ was sent to awaken people to their spiritual nature. Zosimos urged people to resist bodily lust, which attracted the Archons, and instead to focus inwardly on meditation and prayer to directly experience their own souls and the hidden source of divine light in them.

Zosimos was a prolific writer who had a profound influence on the practice of spiritual alchemy. Fragments of his writings survived in the original Greek as well as translations into Arabic and Syriac. He was one of a compendium of forty alchemists published in Constantinople in the 7th Century CE. In 1995, translations of more writings by Zosimos were discovered in *Mafatih al-Rahmah wa-Masabih al-Hikmah* (or “The Keys of Mercy and Secrets of Wisdom”), a compendium of alchemical writings edited by Persian alchemist Al-Tughra'i (1061-1121). More recently, Turkish historian Fuat Sezgin (1924-2018) found 15 more manuscripts by Zosimos in six libraries (Tehran, Cairo, Istanbul, Gotha, Dublin, and Rampur).

Chymes

Another Alexandrian, the Greco-Roman alchemist known as Chymes (or “Chemes”), is said to be the eponymous founder of chemistry. He lived sometime before the 3rd century CE and was probably a contemporary of Maria Prophetissa. Only a few fragments of his writings survived, including this spiritual dictum attributed to him: “One is the All, and it is through it that the All is born. One is the All, and if the All does not contain all, the All will not be born.”¹⁴

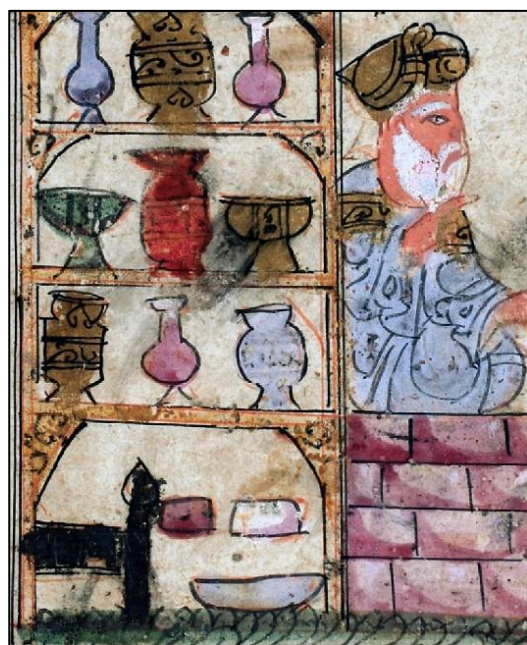


Figure 7. Depiction of alchemist thought to be Chymes.

Chymes dictum is strikingly similar to the caption for the Ouroboros (or snake eating its own tail) from Cleopatra the Alchemist’s book of symbols *Chrysopeoia* (or “Gold Making,” circa 3rd century CE). “One is the Serpent,” she wrote, “that has its poison according to two compositions, yet One is also All, and through is All, and by it is All, and if you have not All, then All is Nothing.”¹⁵

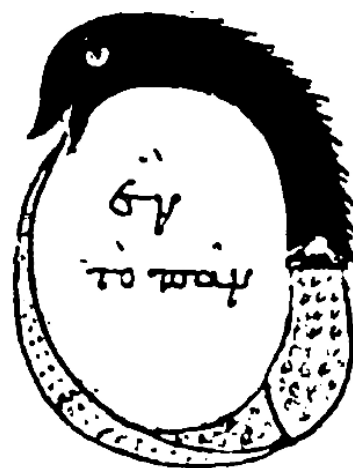


Figure 8. Ouroboros from the book *Chrysopeoia*.

¹⁴ Raphael Patai. *The Jewish Alchemists: A History and Source Book*. Princeton University Press. 2014. p.65

¹⁵ Lindsay, Jack (1970). *The Origins of Alchemy in Graeco-Roman Egypt*. New York: Barnes and Noble.

Cleopatra the Alchemist's depiction of the Ouroboros in her book *Chrysopeoia* is symbolic of the eternal return from – and back to – the One. The “One” is the state before duality or the Pythagorean Monad.”

Cleopatra saw this return to unity as a spiritual journey. Although a practical alchemist, her imagery reflects conception, new birth, and transformation – physically, mentally, and spiritually. She insinuated that alchemy opens up a new spiritual dimension in those who take up the art, and she compares the alchemist who contemplates their work to a loving mother who thinks about her child and feeds it.¹⁶

Maria Prophetissa

Maria Prophetissa (also known as “Miriam the Jewess”) was the first Western alchemist on record. She lived sometime between the 1st and 3rd centuries. Known for her work with water, she is credited with designing advanced dissolution and distillation equipment.

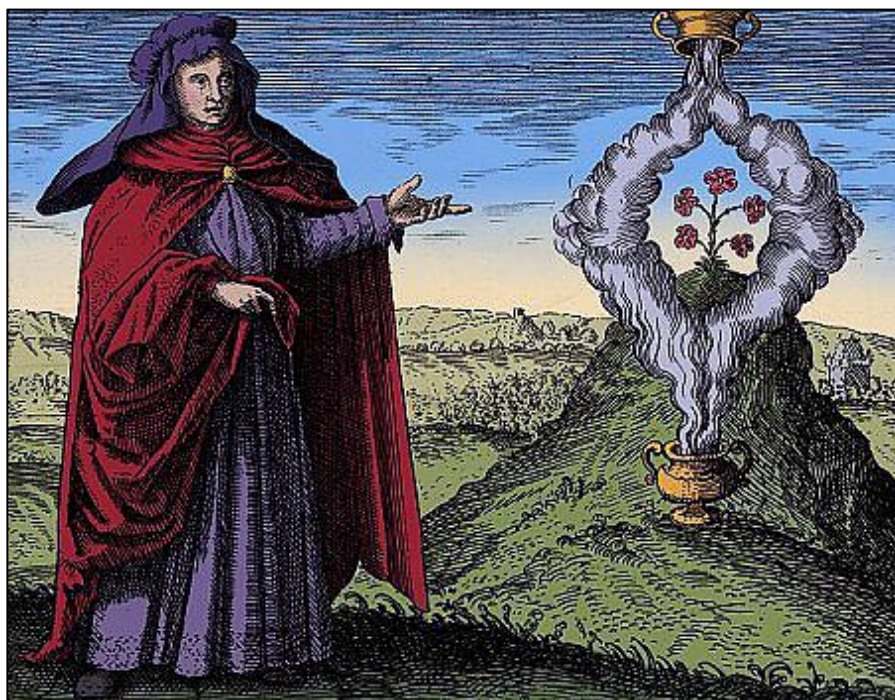


Figure 9. Maria Prophetissa, aka Miriam the Jewess, works with the heavenly waters Above and the earthly waters Below.

In his book *Aula Luci* (or “House of Light,” 1651), Welsh alchemist Thomas Vaughn (1621-1666) connects alchemy with spirituality and the search for enlightenment. In that book, he attributed these words to Maria Prophetissa, in which she seems to be equating the divine “Vessel of Hermes” with the hidden etheric substance of *spiritus*:

“The key to the science of alchemy is in all bodies but owing to the shortness of life and the length of the Work, the stoical philosophers concealed this One

Thing. The philosophers continued to teach openly, save only concerning the Vessel of Hermes, because it is Divine in origin – a thing hidden from the masses by the wisdom of God. Those who are ignorant of it know not the regimen of truth, for want of the Hermetic Vessel.”

¹⁶ Marianne Offereins; Renate Strohmeier (7 March 2011). Apotheker, Jan; Sarkadi, Livia Simon (eds.). *European Women in Chemistry*. Wiley-VCH GmbH & Co. KGaA. pp. 5, 6. ISBN 978-3-527-32956-4.

Maria was one of the first alchemists to speak of the conjunction or joining of the incorporeal (or spiritual) and the corporeal (or material) realms of the Great Work of alchemy. "If you do not render corporeal substances incorporeal," she wrote, "and incorporeal substances corporeal, and if the two are not made one, nothing will be achieved."

Maria clarified the concept of "the One" in terms of the Pythagorean Monad: "Out of the One comes Two," she said, "out of Two comes Three, and from the Third comes the One as the Fourth." She saw the return to the monadic state as a union of opposites: "Join the male and the female," she wrote, "and you will find what is sought."¹⁷

It should be noted that early Alexandrian alchemists like Maria never thought of the elements (Fire, Water, Air, and Earth) as corporeal substances. They were the primordial qualities by which the amorphous and partly quantitative substance of bodies (their "First Matter") first reveals itself in manifested form.¹⁸

Later Alexandrian alchemists developed the mystical aspects of the fundamental concept of the elements and saw in it the possibility of transforming not only matter but also the psychospiritual make-up of alchemists themselves. That is probably the true birth of a separate discipline of spiritual alchemy in Alexandria in the 6th century CE.

Plotinus

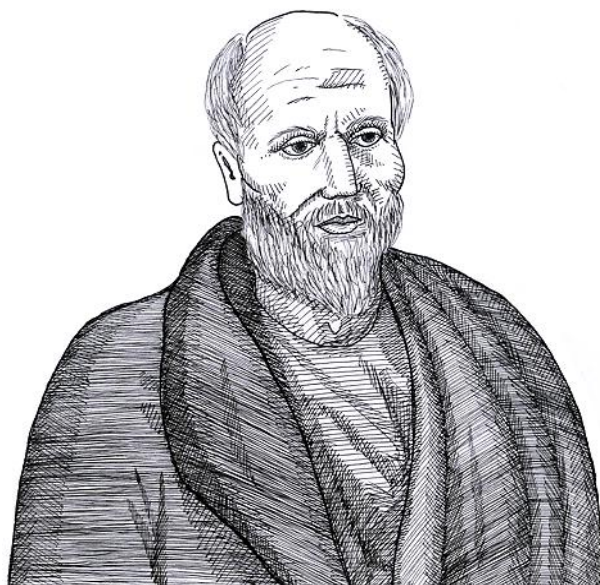


Figure 10. Drawing of Plotinus of Alexandria.

The Alexandrian Greek philosopher Plotinus (circa 200-270 CE) called his method of alchemical meditation "Emanation and Return." The first and most important step is a disciplined rejection of all things arising from the duality of the material world. But for Plotinus, detachment from the physical world is not complete until you get beyond the *Anima Mundi* (or "World Soul").

The *Anima Mundi* is an intrinsically shared soul connected to the sum of all sentient beings in the same way a soul is connected to a single human body. The *Anima Mundi* has two aspects to deal with. The first is the "Lower World Soul," which is the source of an individual's soul or essence

¹⁷ Von Franz, Marie-Louise (1974). *Number and Time: Reflections Leading Towards a Unification of Psychology and Physics*. London: Rider & Company. p. 65. ISBN 0-09-121020-8; Patai, Raphael (1995). *The Jewish Alchemists: A History and Source Book*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press. pp. 60–91. ISBN 978-0-691-00642-0.

¹⁸ Burckhardt, Titus (1967). *Alchemy: Science of the Cosmos, Science of the Soul*. Trans. William Stoddart. Baltimore: Penguin. p. 66. ISBN 978-0-906540-96-1.

in the everyday world as well as the origin of Nature and all inanimate matter. The way through this level is to transcend oneself completely, to leave one's animal or instinctive nature behind in meditative purification.

The second aspect of the *Anima Mundi* is the "Upper World Soul." Once one transcends the body and its animal soul, the work is entirely on the level of *Nous*, which is Greek for "mind." To return to a state of spiritual oneness, a person must transcend even mind itself, so that all that is left is a state of pure Being and unfettered awareness.

After finishing the "return path" through all emanations of manifestation, the meditator finally reaches the monadic realm – the *Unus Mundus* (or "One World") – and becomes a Body of Light.

Plotinus' method of meditation is a process of purification and spiritization to rise beyond all worldly ties of body, mind, and soul. It is the total triumph of *spiritus* in a person. Plotinus is said to have achieved this kind of "ecstatic" or out-of-body union with reality several times in his life. His neoplatonic philosophy inspired many Renaissance alchemists.

Iamblichus



Figure 11. Old engraving of Iamblichus.

The Alexandrian alchemist Iamblichus (245-325 CE) developed a kind of spiritual alchemy called "Theurgy" based on the ancient Egyptian magical tradition of invoking divine powers with ceremonial practices intended to connect with the divine mind through the heightened consciousness of the practitioner.

For Iamblichus, ceremonial magic was a psychospiritual tool that merged the higher astral identity of the practitioner with the divine source Above.

In his *Theurgia: De Mysteriis Aegyptiorum* (or "Theurgy: On the Egyptian Mysteries," 305 CE), he wrote: "The theurgic discipline leads the soul to the Creator of the world and frees it of everything pertaining to the realm of matter by uniting it with the Sole Eternal Reason or *logos*."

Theurgy and Hermetic forms of spiritual alchemy coexisted with emerging Christianity in Alexandria in the 3rd century CE. Early Christian authors like Lactantius (250-325 CE) wrote that Hermes had prophesized the birth of Christianity. Lactantius even wrote an alchemical poem called *The Phoenix* based on Egyptian and Arabian myths about the alchemical Fire Bird that was resurrected from its ashes – a clear allegory of spiritual rebirth.

Hypatia



Figure 12. Drawing of Hypatia of Alexandria.

Hypatia of Alexandria (355-415 CE) was a renowned female alchemist, astronomer, mathematician, and philosopher. Her psychospiritual teachings dealt with meditative approaches to union with the One, which is an underlying reality partially accessible via the human powers of imagination and abstraction. However, because of successive burnings of the Great Library of Alexandria, only scant written evidence of her methods has survived.

Hypatia was an independent scholar who vigorously defended her ideas, and many men were upset by her high regard as a female intellectual. In March 415, Christian fanatics set fire to the Great Library, and Hypatia was dragged out of the library onto the streets of Alexandria where she was brutally beaten, dismembered, and set on fire.

Hypatia's death and successive burnings of the repository of wisdom that was the Great Library

marked the end of the Alexandrian era of alchemy and the beginning of the Dark Ages for Europe.

Stephanos of Alexandria

Stephanos of Alexandria (circa 580-640 CE) was an Alexandrian philosopher who wrote on alchemy and probably practiced the craft. He was one of the last leaders in the Alexandrian academic tradition before the Arabs conquered Egypt.

Prior to the invasion, sometime after Emperor Heraclius came to power in 610 CE, Stephanos moved to Constantinople, the new capital of the empire. He became a professor at the Imperial Academy and is credited with bridging the Alexandrian and Byzantine academic traditions.

Stephanos emphasized the mental and spiritual aspects of alchemy. “Put away the material theory,” he advised his students, “so that you may be deemed worthy to see with your intellectual eyes the hidden mystery.”¹⁹

In his breakthrough book. *The Origins of Alchemy in Graeco-Roman Egypt*, Jack Lindsay documents the change of a qualitative, spiritual alchemy into the quantitative, practical science of chemistry that began in Alexandria. The alchemical work consisted of “the vision of a unitary process and nodal points of qualitative change”. This qualitative “unitary process” was at the heart of spiritual alchemy. Modern chemistry lacks this qualitative aspect and is, in Lindsay’s words, “not just alchemy without the nonsense; it was alchemy tamed – reduced wholly to a quantitative level, and thus giving up its ghost” (or inner spirit). According to Lindsay, the quantitative precision of the scientific chemistry that emerged in this period of history was necessary but “developed at the expense of the essential vision of and relationship with the qualitative aspect of Nature that was the unique province of alchemy.”²⁰

Arabian Alchemy

After about 400 CE, the works of Greek alchemists were mostly commentaries on the contributions of their predecessors. Gradually, alchemists turned towards more spiritual concerns, and by the 7th century, alchemical texts were almost all mystical writings.²¹

It was about that time the Islamic alchemist Khalid Ibn Yazid (668-709) began organizing the first translations of Greek alchemical texts into Arabic. His book *Liber de Compositione Alchemiae* (or “Book on the Composition of Alchemy”) became the first Arabic work on alchemy to be translated into Latin (by Robert of Chester in 1144). After the fall of Alexandria, Greek alchemy was also preserved in Byzantine texts.²²

With the fall of the Roman Empire, Europe entered a period of fear, book-burning, ignorance, and distrust of scholarly learning that lasted 500 years. The Church controlled people’s thoughts with harsh punishments and torture for anything outside their dogma. The Church even forbid the practice of meditation as a path to achieve union with God – that was something the Church also wanted to control.

¹⁹ Keith Dickson, “Stephanos of Alexandria”, in Paul T. Keyser; Georgia L. Irby-Massie (eds.), *The Encyclopedia of Ancient Natural Scientists: The Greek Tradition and Its Many Heirs*, Routledge, 2008. pp.759–760; F. Sherwood Taylor, *The Alchemical Works of Stephanos of Alexandria*, in *Ambix, the Journal of the Society for the Study of Alchemy and Early Chemistry*, London 1937, 116–139; 2, 1938, 38-49; Maria Papathanassiou, (1992), “Stephanos von Alexandria und Sein Alchemistisches Werk”, Ph.D. Thesis, Humboldt Universität, Berlin.

²⁰ *Alchemical Traditions From Antiquity to the Avant-Garde*, Aaron Cheak (ed.), 2013, ISBN 978-0987559821; *The Origins of Alchemy in Graeco-Roman Egypt*, Jack Lindsay. 1970. ISBN: 978-0584100051.

²¹ F. Sherwood Taylor. *Alchemists, Founders of Modern Chemistry*, p.26; Allen G. Debus. *Alchemy and Early Modern Chemistry: Papers from Ambix*, p. 36.

²² Glen Warren Bowersock, Peter Robert Lamont Brown, Oleg Grabar. *Late antiquity: a guide to the postclassical world*. pp. 284–285; Roberts, Alexandre M. (2019). “Framing a Middle Byzantine Alchemical Codex”. *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*. 73: 69–70.

The oral teachings and copies of scrolls that survived the burning of the Great Library moved into the Arabic lands where they sparked a new age of enlightenment. Had Arab scholars not preserved the original texts, alchemy would not have survived the Dark Ages. Finally, with the Moorish invasion of Spain in 711 CE, the Arabs introduced the ancient teachings in Europe. For the next 1,000 years, alchemy flourished in Europe.

Al Razi

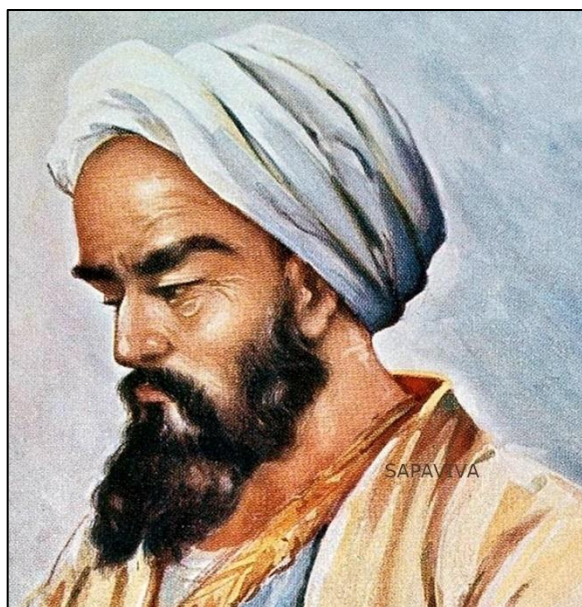


Figure 13. Painting of the Persian alchemist Al Razi.

Abū Bakr al-Rāzī (864-925 CE) was a Persian alchemist who became one of the world's first medical experts. Known simply as “Al-Razi,” he wrote several books on alchemy, the most famous of which was his *Sirr al-Asrar* (or “Secret of Secrets”). In that book, he focused on chemical processes and equipment used in pharmaceutical preparations.

But Al Razi also taught a kind of mental alchemy, and today, he is considered the “father of psychology and psychotherapy.”²³ He also developed an alchemical metaphysical doctrine called the “Five Eternals” in which the universe is created by the interaction between the divine Mind and the four other eternal principles of Soul, Matter, Time, and Place.²⁴

Ibn Umayl

Ibn Umayl (900-960 CE) was an Islamic spiritual alchemist who recognized the problem of literal interpretation of the mystical symbology of alchemy. Known as “the Senior Zadith” in Europe, Umayl attacked practical alchemists who took their subject literally and ignored the symbolic, mystical meaning of alchemy – its “precious goal that is tragically overlooked.”

“The ancient philosophers,” Umayl noted in his book *The Pure Pearl*, “wrote many books on such things as eggs, hair, biles, milk, semen, claws, salt, sulfur, iron, copper, silver, mercury, gold and all the various animals and plants. But then, scribes would copy and circulate these books according to the apparent or literal meaning of these things, and waste their time and possessions, and ruin their very souls.”²⁵

²³ Phipps, Claude (5 October 2015). *No Wonder You Wonder!: Great Inventions and Scientific Mysteries*. Springer. p. 111. ISBN 9783319216805.

²⁴ Marenbon, John (14 June 2012). *The Oxford Handbook of Medieval Philosophy*. Oxford University Press. pp. 69–70. ISBN 9780195379488.

²⁵ Starr, Peter: *Towards a Context for Ibn Umayl, Known to Chaucer as the Alchemist Senior*. Retrieved 2024-05-06.

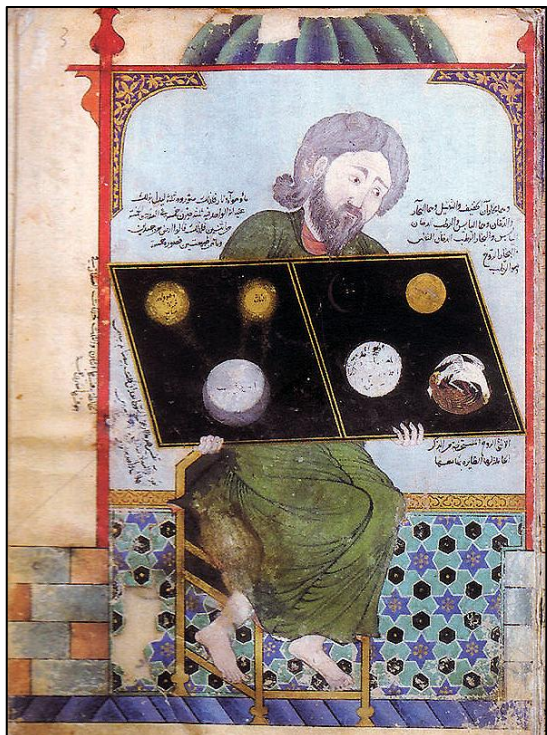


Figure 14. The spiritual alchemist Ibn Umayl teaching about the sacred symbols of alchemy.

Umayl wrote a compendium of alchemical symbology called *Kitab Hall ar-Rumuz* (or “The Book of the Explanation of the Symbols”) in which he declared “the ancient sages spoke a language in symbols, and they could not reveal the secret of the Philosopher’s Stone except with symbols.” In his compendium, Umayl provides an exhaustive list of symbolic names for basic topics in alchemy, such as the Stone, Water, Fire, Sol and Luna, etc., from the viewpoint of a single inner mystery or mystical experience that cannot be fully explained in words.²⁶

In his books, Umayl presented himself as an unbiased interpreter of mysterious alchemical symbols. He set the location of his *Book of the Silvery Water and Starry Earth* in the prison at the Egyptian temple *Sidr wa-Abu Sir*, where Yasuf (or “Joseph”) learned how to interpret the dreams of the Pharaoh.²⁷

“None of those people who are famous for their wisdom,” Umayl wrote, “could explain a word of what the ancient philosophers said. In their books they only continue using the same terms that we find in their writings. But what is necessary, if I am a sage to whom secrets have been revealed, and if I have learned the symbolic meanings, is that I explain the mysteries of the philosophers.”²⁸

The Swiss psychologist Carl Jung (1875-1961) recognized in ibn Umayl's story the ability to bring self-realization to his patients by interpreting their dreams, and from the early 1940s focused his work on alchemical symbolism. Another Swiss psychologist, Theodor Abt (born 1947), notes that that Umayl's *Book of the Silvery Water and the Starry Earth* is a description of the process of personal distillation in which “continuous pondering over the different symbols creates a new level of consciousness (symbolized by 'light' or 'gold') out of the reality of matter, Nature, and the body (or 'Starry Earth'). This shows that the alchemical process is in fact entirely a psychological work based on dealing with concrete matter and bodily reality.”²⁹

²⁶ Mohammed ibn Umayl: *Book of the Explanation of the Symbols - Kitab Hall ar-Rumuz*, edited by Theodor Abt and W. Madelung, *Corpus Alchemicum Arabicum* (CALA) 1, Zurich 2003; von Franz, Marie-Louise 2006. Theodor Abt (ed.). *Book of the Explanation of the Symbols. Kitāb Hall ar-Rumūz by Muḥammad ibn Umayl. Corpus Alchemicum Arabicum* (CALA) IA. Zurich: Theodor Abt, *Psychological Commentary on Ibn Umayl's "Book of the Explanation of the Symbols - Kitab Hall ar-Rumuz"*, *Corpus Alchemicum Arabicum* (CALA 1B), Zurich 2009.

²⁷ Koran: 12 Yusuf; and Genesis: 4.

²⁸ Turāb ‘Alī, M.; Stapleton, H. E.; Hidāyat Ḥusain, M. (1933). “Three Arabic Treatises on Alchemy by Muḥammad bin Umail (10th century A.D.)”. *Memoirs of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*. 12 (1): 1–213. OCLC 29062383. This seminal work was reprinted in facsimile in 2002 as *Ibn Umayl (fl. c. 912). Texts and Studies* (Collection “Natural Science in Islam”).

²⁹ Abt, Theodor; Madelung, Wilferd; Hofmeier, Thomas (2003). *Book of the Explanation of the Symbols; Kitāb Hall ar-Rumūz by Muḥammad ibn Umail. Corpus Alchemicum Arabicum* (CALA) I. Translated by Salwa Fuad and Theodor Abt. Zurich: Living Human Heritage Publications.p. XIII.

Buddhist Alchemy

Siddhartha Gautama



Figure 15. Painting of the Hindu prince Siddhartha Gautama meditating under a fig tree.

The founder of Buddhism, Siddhartha Gautama (563-483 BCE), was a Hindu prince who renounced his family's wealth and became a spiritual ascetic who practiced intense meditation to achieve the state of *nirvana*.

The Sanskrit term *nirvana* means literally "blowing out a candle" or "becoming extinguished," and it refers to a state of utter extinction – not of existence but of debilitating passions and the suffering of ego – especially the deep-rooted delusion of "I" and the continuous stream of thoughts

and emotions that cloud our awareness.

Nirvana is best understood as the truth of what is still there after the extinction of ego and the deep realization of the impermanence of worldly things. The extinction of ego produces a state known as *anatta*, which is Sanskrit for "No Self." This freedom allows one to penetrate the monadic realm which is "unborn, unoriginated, and unformed."

According to Buddhist teachings, Siddhartha achieved "*nirvana* with remainder" at the age of 35 after meditating for 49 days under a fig tree at a temple in Bihar, India. Although he destroyed the cause of his future rebirth, he lived on as the Buddha (Sanskrit for "The Awakened One") and taught for another 45 years. When he died, he entered "*nirvana* without remainder" – never to be reborn again.

Buddha never claimed to be a god – he even warned that religious dogma was a hindrance to clear thinking. Instead, he sought enlightened methods anyone could use to understand life in the deepest way possible. "What you think, you become," he told his followers. "What you feel, you attract. What you imagine, you create."

Buddhist alchemy slowly took shape in the centuries after the death of Buddha. Some Buddhist texts from the 3rd century BCE mention mercury, but the idea of transmuting base metals into gold does not appear until the 2nd to 5th centuries CE. The concept of attaining personal immortality through spiritual alchemy did not formally become a goal of Buddhist alchemy until the 10th century CE.³⁰

Dzogchen

Around 800 CE, a new form of spiritual alchemy known as *Dzogchen* was taking root in Tibet. *Dzogchen* (or “the Great Completion”) focuses on discovering and lingering in the “Primal Ground” of existence, which is characterized by a living compassionate light, pregnant silence, ultimate purity, and eternal spontaneity.

One branch of *Drogchen* alchemy is the *Vajra* Bridge tradition, which offers some practical suggestions for reaching the Primal Ground in meditation. The *Vajra* Bridge is the pathway connecting your physical body with your Body of Light. When the Bridge is crossed, your real physical body automatically dissolves into its true nature, which is light.

To practice the *Vajra* Bridge technique, first find a secluded, quiet place and cut all attachment to the external senses. This can be done by darkening and soundproofing the room or using modern equipment designed for this kind of meditation, such as an isolation tank. The environment must be one of utter silence, darkness, and disconnection from the everyday world. Next, establish a comfortable posture and let the energies of your bodily functions and organs settle naturally. Relax into a state of simple ordinary awareness and focus inward.

Externally, the elements of the body are balanced; internally, even inhalation and exhalation seem minimal, as you enter a state of “embryonic breathing” without any awareness of the movement of the chest. At this point, you arrive at an understanding of uncontrived naturalness, which is the default state of “natural enlightenment.”

Now, contemplation on the true nature of your “mind” can begin. With the establishment of the link (the *Vajra* Bridge) to your inner light, which is your true body, try to enter a state of “non-meditation” characterized by these Four Signs:

- The first sign is the experience of **non-conceptuality** or the absence of all thoughts.
- The second is **clarity and gnosis** or the feeling that everything is known, and nothing is hidden anymore.
- The third sign is a feeling of complete bliss or **satisfying wholeness**.
- The fourth sign is the union or inseparability of the previous three signs as a fourth condition, which is a fully integrated and ultimate state of **being in pure light**.

³⁰ Preece, Rob. *The Alchemical Buddha: Introducing the Psychology of Buddhist Tantra*. Mudra Publications, 2000. ISBN 978-0953892907.

The name for the Primal Ground in *Dzogchen* is “gzhi” (pronounced “gay-zee”), which translates as “basis.” The *gzhi* is the default state of the manifested universe before sentient beings were created. It is responsible for the diversity and origin of objects in the world. It is like the Hermetic light of “Mind the Maker” or the First Matter (or *spiritus*) of Western alchemists. The three aspects of *gzhi* are:

- 1) **Essence** (or “Base Emptiness”) is the original state of cosmic innocence beyond time—a pure emptiness free from dualistic extremes. The ultimate purity of this Primal Ground is witnessed by becoming empty of thoughts and letting go of striving and expectations. A person cannot awaken unless they have achieved a pure empty consciousness. This state has been compared to the “emptiness” of a mirror which allows it to take on any image.
- 2) **Nature** (or the “Luminous Path”) is the spiritual impulse towards “natural perfection.” It is sometimes defined as a “spontaneous presence or accomplishment” that is not dependent on anything else. The timeless spontaneity of the *gzhi* is achieved by gaining “luminous clarity.” This aspect is associated with light, luminosity, and mental acuity. It has been compared to the capacity of a mirror to reflect a pure beam of light.
- 3) **Compassion** (or the “Fruit of Unobstructed Love”) is associated with the energy of manifestation. It is the immanent presence of the Primal Ground expressed in appearances or objects. This state of living in compassionate unity with the *gzhi* originates in feelings of “inner mercy and self-compassion” that lead to spiritual longing. It has been compared to the fleeting, passing appearances reflected in a mirror.

The experience of the *gzhi* or Primal Ground is a form of *rigpa* (“gnosis” or “spiritual knowledge”), a word which has also come to mean “pristine awareness” in the sense that pristine awareness *is* the Primal Ground. On the personal level, one must discover their “unfabricated mind” in meditation before they can achieve *rigpa*.

Modern Tibetan *Dzogchen* master Namkhai Norbu (1938-2018) described *rigpa* as a “reflexively self-aware primordial wisdom” that arises in the nirvanic state. He notes that one’s true nature in *nirvana* is like a mirror that reflects with complete openness but is unaffected by its reflections. This ultimate objective clarity cannot be found by reasoning or by reading sacred texts anywhere in the world. It has to be experienced directly.

This idea is reflected in the influential *Dzogchen* text “Cuckoo of Awareness” (also known as the “Cuckoo’s Song of Total Presence”). In the Tibetan tradition, the Cuckoo is the magical King of all birds. These six lines are also called the *Six Vajra Verses*. The *Vajra* is a thunderbolt of light and power wielded by Indra, the Lord of Heaven. These simple words form the root text of *Dzogchen* and the basis out of which all its teachings and meditations can be extrapolated:

The Cuckoo of Awareness

The nature of multiplicity is nondual,
and things in themselves are pure and simple;
being here and now is thought-free,
and it shines out in all forms, always all good;
it is already perfect, so the striving sickness is avoided,
and spontaneity is constantly present.



Figure 16. Painting of Kuntu Zangpo, the Primordial Buddha.

The earliest *Dzogchen* teachings are in the tradition of Kuntu Zangpo, a mythic figure who was sometimes known as the “Primordial Buddha.” His teachings discourage any kind of structured practices or meditative instructions for achieving *rigpa*, which is the act of experiencing the Primal Ground (*gzhi*).

Instead, the tradition argues that there is nothing to do and nothing to strive for in meditation. The reality of the *gzhi* can manifest in its existential immediacy anywhere you are. All things and situations originate from the fundamental ground, which is our absolute nature, and the *gzhi* is always present and always perfect.

The Kuntu Zangpo tradition is considered superior to all other Buddhist disciplines for experiencing the ground of being (*gzhi*), and all the other methods are seen as “intellectual fabrications.” Kuntu Zangpo points the meditator to directly experience the default nature of reality by simply letting go and relaxing completely into the space around you. The “ground of being” is immediately present everywhere.

So, in your meditation, stop thinking and stop trying to create the *gzhi* space yourself – sever all associations with your expectations about that space – and you will begin to sense the hidden ground of being. Wait quietly and relax completely without any structured thoughts about what is going on.³¹

In his paper *The Space Section of the Great Perfection: Philosophical and Meditative Teachings of Tibetan Buddhism* (2005), Oslo University scholar Sten Anspal elaborates on this idea:

³¹ If you are interested in other *Dzogchen* meditation, I recommend the free course at StudyBuddhism.com under Advanced Studies / Vajrayana / How to Meditate on *Dzogchen*.

“The term ‘space’ in the *Drogchen* tradition is used to describe aspects in which the individual's true nature of mind is analogous to space itself. In this state, space is present everywhere and no effort is needed to reach it; it cannot be transcended: it is immense; encompassing everything; it is devoid of characteristics and cannot be apprehended; it is without center or periphery; it is eternal and uncaused; there is no support in space and nothing to focus on. The ‘space’ sections of the *Drogchen* texts do not prescribe any particular techniques for the practitioner, such as physical postures, movements, structured meditative exercises, etc.”

Hermetic Alchemy

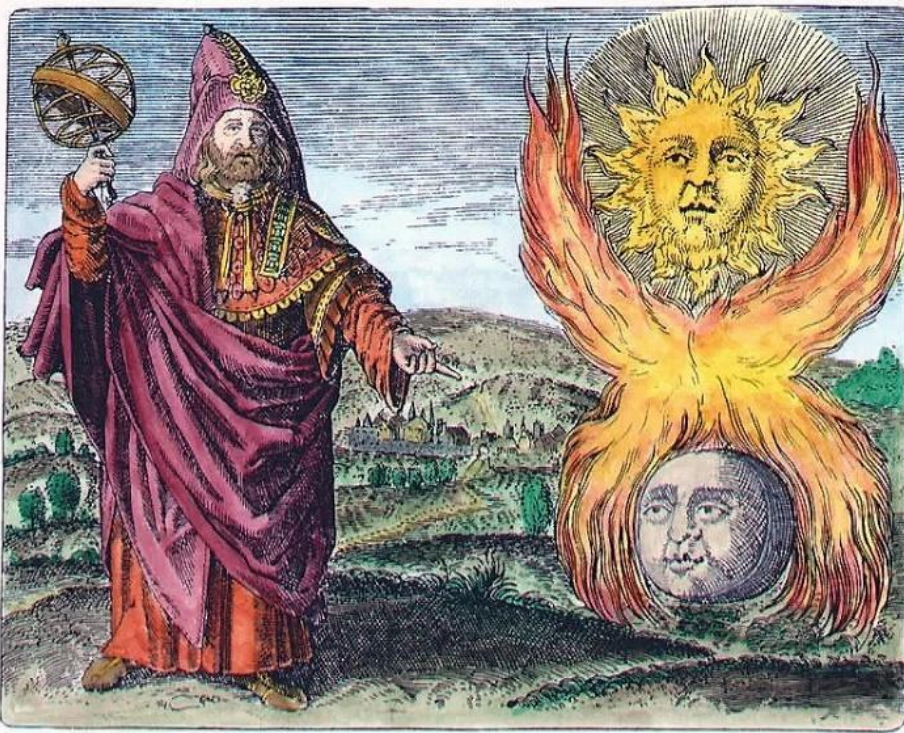


Figure 17. Hermes Trismegistus uniting the Solar and Lunar archetypes in the fire of consciousness during meditation.

The mythic figure of the Egyptian sage known as Hermes Trismegistus (Latin for “Hermes Thrice Greatest”) arose in Ptolemaic Egypt from the syncretic melding of the Egyptian god Thoth and the Greek god Hermes. Hermes was the god of inspiration and flowing communication, while Thoth was the god of intellect and wisdom. The two gods were worshipped as one “Thoth-Hermes” in a sacred temple in Hermopolis.

The oldest known meditation in the world comes from an ancient Egyptian scroll called

The Destruction of Humankind (1400 BCE). The meditation begins with instructions on creating a circle of meditative space:

“Whensoever Thoth speaks to you, and you wish to recite a composition on behalf of the Sun, then you must perform a sevenfold purification for three sunrises. Whether a person or a group shall so proceed, you shall make your position in a circle, which is made beyond you, and your eyes shall be fixed within the circle. All your actions shall be composed and motionless, and your steps shall not carry you away from the circle.

“If you shall attentively dwell within the circle and observe with the eyes of your heart, you will find the path that leads Above. Even so, shall the image become your guide, for the divine sight has this peculiar charm: It holds fast and draws unto it those who succeed in opening their eyes in this way. Now whosoever shall vocalize the sacred words shall visualize themselves as Thoth or as Ra in the redness of the dawn of his birth. Thus, shall a thought exclusively occupying your mind be transformed into the actual state, and from this lesson, your house shall never fall into decay but will endure throughout eternity.”³²

Thoth-Hermes became a powerful psychospiritual symbol of alchemy among Egyptian, Arabian, and Jewish alchemists in Alexandria between 30 CE to 100 CE. It was probably a backlash against the dominant practical stance of empirical alchemy among the Aristotelian Greeks.

After the Dark Ages ended in Europe, Thoth-Hermes resurfaced as “Hermes Trismegistus” (Latin for “Hermes Thrice-Greatest”) to become the ancient Magus of alchemy who knew how to harness the powers of the Above and the Below. The medieval Church appropriated the emerging myth of Hermes and honored him as a historical figure, a prophet who foresaw the rise of Christianity. Most people at the time thought Hermes was a real person, although those who realized his mythic power had no problem writing treatises on Hermetic philosophy in his name.

Hermes also became popular in Islamic culture, where he was identified with the prophet Idris. This version of Hermes was thrice great because he had a threefold origin. The first Hermes was Thoth, who recorded his teachings in hieroglyphs. The second Hermes was a Babylonian scholar who was the teacher of Pythagoras. The third Hermes was an alchemist known as the “Faceless Prophet.”

Few historical fictions were as fruitful as Hermes Trismegistus. Hundreds of influential texts were written in his name. There are two main groups of his works: 1) Technical works on alchemy, pharmacology, and astrology dating back to the 3rd century BCE; and 2) Philosophical works on cosmology, theology, and spiritual rebirth dating from the 1st century CE.

The seventeen texts of the popular *Corpus Hermeticum* fall into this latter category. Many of the treatises call for the reader to follow the “way of Hermes,” a path of personal transformation leading to psychological and spiritual rebirth and eventually to the heavenly ascent of one’s soul. There are also scores of pseudepigrapha texts produced in Hermes’ name well into the 11th century CE.³³

³² The original papyrus is in the Egyptian Museum of Turin, Italy, but sections are inscribed on the walls of the tombs of Sety I, Ramesses II, Ramesses III, and Tutankhamun.

³³ During the Middle Ages, the original Hermetic texts spread from Egypt into the Byzantine Empire centered in Constantinople. In the 15th Century, a new Latin translation of the Greek Hermetic texts known as the *Corpus Hermeticum* began circulating in Europe; Bull, Christian H. (2018). *The Tradition of Hermes Trismegistus: The Egyptian Priestly Figure as a Teacher of Hellenized Wisdom*. Leiden; Copenhagen, Brian P. (1992). *Hermetica: The Greek Corpus Hermeticum and the Latin Asclepius in a New English Translation, with Notes and Introduction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. ISBN 0-521-42543-3.

Another primary text attributed to Hermes Trismegistus is the *Tabula Smaragdina* (Latin for “the Emerald Tablet”), which is a succinct summary of Hermetic philosophy and the basic tenets of spiritual alchemy.

According to legend, the Tablet was a bas-relief inscription on an emerald or green volcanic glass written by Hermes Trismegistus. Some reports say the original *Emerald Tablet* was written in the Phoenician language about 30 BCE. But historical evidence suggests it might have been written in Alexandria around 80 CE. The first surviving copy of the Tablet is from 8th century Arabia. The revered *Emerald Tablet* is a prose poem that had a tremendous impact on Western alchemy and meditation.

Ortolanus

Ortolanus (also known as “Hortulanus”) was a medieval alchemist who has been identified as the Dominican friar Jakob Ortlein of Nördlingen (1275–1325). His primary text was a dissertation on the *Emerald Tablet* titled *Liber Super Textum Hermetis* (or “Commentary on the Emerald Tablet of Hermes”).

However, the first section of his book is not about the Tablet. It is titled *Spiritus Quinte Essentie et in Quo Elemento Habitat* (or “The Spiritual Quintessence and in Which Element it Dwells”) and focuses on creating the Quintessence, an etheric substance he obtained from *Argento Vivo* (wine). He is the first alchemist to correlate alcohol and the Quintessence, although he believed the Quintessence is present everywhere including the human body.

Ortolanus likens the Quintessence to the “primordial heat” mentioned by Hermes, who described it as an etheric substrate of creation that gives dynamism to the whole cosmos. So, the Quintessence, at least as Ortolanus saw it, is the same as our idea of the *spiritus* as an etheric substance that exists between Heaven Above and Earth Below.

The second part of Ortolanus’ book is a commentary on the *Emerald Tablet* of Hermes Trismegistus. Ortolanus interpreted it as an allegorical recipe for the Philosopher’s Stone. This second part of Ortolanus’ book became extremely popular in the early Middle Ages and underwent several reprintings into the Renaissance. However, the first part was never published and his development of the concept of the Quintessence was forgotten for centuries.

But there were many other treatises on the *Emerald Tablet*. The earliest was in the *Sirr al-khalīqa wa-ṣan‘at al-ṭabī‘a* (or “The Secret of Creation and the Art of Nature”), also known as the *Kitāb al-ilal* (or “The Book of Causes”), which is an encyclopedia of natural philosophy published in the late 8th Century but was most likely based on much older Greek and Syriac versions.³⁴

³⁴ Weisser, Ursula (1979). *Buch über das Geheimnis der Schöpfung und die Darstellung der Natur (Buch der Ursachen) von Pseudo-Apollonios von Tyana*. Sources and Studies in the History of Arabic-Islamic Science. Aleppo: Institute for the History of Arabic Science. OCLC 13597803; Kraus, Paul (1942–1943). *Jâbir ibn Hayyân: Contribution à l'histoire des idées scientifiques dans l'Islam. I. Le corpus des écrits jâbiriens. II. Jâbir et la science grecque*. Cairo: Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale. ISBN 9783487091150. OCLC 468740510. (vol. II, pp. 270–303 about pseudo-Apollonius of Tyana's *Sirr al-khalīqa* or “The Secret of Creation”).

As we noted earlier, the *Liber de Compositione Alchemiae* (or the “Book of the Composition of Alchemy”) is the first compendium on alchemy translated from Arabic into Latin. The translation by the Englishman Robert of Chester was completed in February 1144 and became one of the most popular texts among medieval alchemists. It alludes to many of the alchemical principles revealed in the *Emerald Tablet*.³⁵

The book states that the alchemical elixir is “taken from One and composed by One,” which is probably a reference to the *Emerald Tablet* which states “the performance of wonders stems from One, just as all things stem from One according to a single procedure.”³⁶

The *Liber Hermetis de Alchemia* (or “The Book of Hermes on Alchemy”) is another collection of commentaries on the *Emerald Tablet*. It was translated from the Arabic and then into Latin. This Latin version of the Tablet is the one on which most other later versions are based.³⁷ It is the version on which the author bases his own translation:

The Emerald Tablet

In Truth, without deceit, certain, and most veritable.

That which is Below corresponds to that which is Above, and that which is Above corresponds to that which is Below, to accomplish the miracles of the One Thing. And just as all things have come from this One Thing, through the meditation of One Mind, so do all created things originate from this One Thing by Transformation.

Its father is the Sun; its Mother the Moon. The Wind carries it in its belly; its nurse is the Earth. It is the origin of All, the consecration of the whole Universe; its essence is perfected, if it is turned into Earth.

Separate the Earth from Fire, the Subtle from the Gross – gently with great Ingenuity. It ascends from Earth to Heaven and descends again to Earth, thereby combining within Itself the powers of both the Above and the Below.



Figure 18. The *Liber Hermetis de Alchemia*.

³⁵ Dapsens, Marion (2016). “De la Risālat Maryānus au De Compositione alchemiae: Quelques réflexions sur la tradition d'un traité d'alchimie” (PDF). *Studia graeco-arabica* 6:121–140; Ruska, Julius (1924). *Arabische Alchemisten I. Chālid ibn Jazīd ibn Mu'āwija*. Heidelberg: Carl Winter.

³⁶ Halleux, Robert (1996). “The Reception of Arabic Alchemy in the West”. In Rashed, Roshdi (ed.). *Encyclopedia of the History of Arabic Science*. Vol. 3. London: Routledge. pp. 886–902. ISBN 9780415020633; Rosenthal, Franz (1975)

³⁷ Steele, Robert; Singer, Dorothea Waley (1928). “The Emerald Table”. *Proceedings of the Royal Society of Medicine*. 21 (3): 41–57/485–501.

Thus, will you obtain the Glory of the Whole Universe. All Obscurity will be clear to you. This is the greatest Force of all powers because it conquers every Subtle thing and penetrates every Solid thing.

In this way was the Universe created. From this comes many wonderous Applications because this is the Pattern.

Therefore, am I called Thrice Greatest Hermes, having all three parts of the knowledge of the Whole Universe. Herein have I completely explained the Operation of the Sun.



Figure 19. Author's rendition of the Emerald Tablet.

The Tablet speaks of a panpsychic One Mind that creates reality by the projection of “thought” or what the Greeks called the *logos*. Most alchemists of the Middle Ages and Renaissance had their own personal translation of the *Emerald Tablet*, including Albertus Magnus, Paracelsus, Francis Bacon, John Dee, and Isaac Newton.³⁸

In the Hermetic metaphysics espoused in the Tablet, the primordial Substance is called the “One Thing.” The One Thing is the omnipresent spiritual source of physical reality – our idea of the *spiritus* – which in today’s physics, would be seen as the “Quantum Foam,” the Planck level of reality (at 10^{-35} meters) from which material particles emerge.

More importantly, from the alchemical point of view, the One Thing is the spiritual substance (or *spiritus*) from which the universe proceeds both

physically and mentally, and the One Mind is the ordering principle that governs it. Ultimately, in Hermetic philosophy, the duality of the One Thing and the One Mind becomes unified in the One, which is the true monadic divinity in Hermeticism.

³⁸ *The Secret History of Hermes Trismegistus: Hermeticism from Ancient to Modern Times*. Florian Ebeling. Cornell University Press, 2007. p.51

The relationship between the two aspects of the One is put forth in the *Emerald Tablet*, in which the “Above” is the spiritual or mental realm of the macrocosm and the “Below” is the created or physical world in the microcosm. The Tablet is a poetically intuitive metaphysical summary of Hermetic philosophy that points directly at the monistic Substance – the *spiritus* we are seeking.

Late Middle Ages

Jalal Rumi



Figure 20. Painting of Jalal ad-Din ar-Rumi.

Jalal ad-Din Mohammed ar-Rumi (1207-1273) was a Persian scholar, poet, and spiritual alchemist whose writings have been widely translated. Whatever personal experiences fueled Rumi’s amazing spiritual insights, we do know that he connected with another reality beyond time and space.

“My soul is from elsewhere,” he said. “I’m sure of that, and I intend to end up there. I existed when there were neither names nor the things that are named.”

The following is Rumi’s epic poem “The Alchemy of Love,” which describes his view of how universal love drives the alchemy of creation:

The Alchemy of Love

You come to us
from another world

From beyond the stars
and void of space.
Transcendent, Pure,
Of unimaginable beauty,
Bringing with you
the essence of love

You transform all
who are touched by you.

Mundane concerns,
troubles, and sorrows
dissolve in your presence,
Bringing joy
to ruler and ruled

To peasant and king

You bewilder us
with your grace.

All evils
transform into
goodness.

You are the master alchemist.

You light the fire of love
in earth and sky
in heart and soul
of every being.

Through your love
existence and nonexistence merge.
All opposites unite.
All that is profane
becomes sacred again."

The alchemical theology of divine love taught by Rumi requires us "to die before you die," to remove all traces of our lower selves, including our personal identity and will, until only the Beloved remains. At that point, only the pure soul remains, immortal and forever united with the Mind of the cosmos – "like a candle flame lost in the glare of the rising Sun."

Paul of Taranto

Paul of Taranto was a 13th century Italian Franciscan alchemist who argued that the human mind has powers superior to Nature, and he viewed alchemists as artists able to manipulate reality. “The hand does not write by the motion alone of Nature,” he noted, “but as ruled by intellect through art.”³⁹

Paul lists two kinds of alchemical arts. Purely “Artificial Art” transforms the extrinsic or superficial characteristics of Nature, while “Perfective Art” changes the intrinsic essences in Nature. Overall, Paul tried to create a solid theoretical framework for both practical and spiritual alchemy in his writings.

Paul of Taranto wrote *Theorica et Practica* (“Theory and Practice”), which defended alchemy by describing the principles behind it. Paul is also credited with writing the popular alchemical text *Summa Perfectionis* (“The Sum of Perfection”), which was erroneously attributed to Pseudo-Geber.⁴⁰

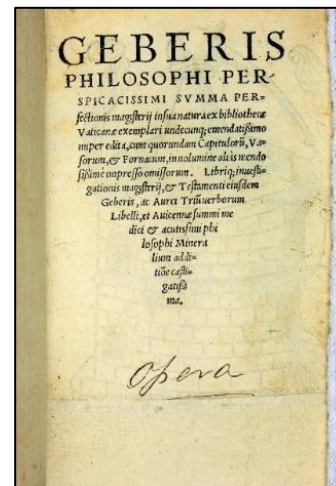


Figure 21. *The Summa Perfectionis* by Paul of Taranto.

Thomas Aquinas

Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) was a Dominican friar who studied under the great medieval alchemist Albertus Magnus (1193-1280). Aquinas went on to surpass his master to become one of the most distinguished philosophers in history. Aquinas wrote hundreds of texts on a wide variety of alchemical and philosophical topics and is believed to have created the influential alchemy text *Aurora Consurgens* (Latin for “The Rising Dawn”), which is an alchemical interpretation of the biblical “Song of Songs.”

Aquinas popularized the works of Aristotle and wrote a monumental compendium of religious philosophy called *Summa Theologica*, which consisted of 3,125 articles on all aspects of theology. In his *Summa*, Aquinas described the “absolute nature” of the divine as consisting of five qualities: Oneness, Wholeness, Perfection, Immutability, and Infinite.

³⁹ Paul of Taranto, *Theorica et practica*, in William R. Newman, *Promethean Ambitions: Alchemy and the Quest to Perfect Nature* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2004), 69.

⁴⁰ Pseudo-Geber (1991). *The Summa Perfectionis of Pseudo-Geber: A Critical Edition, Translation and Study*. BRILL. ISBN 978-90-04-09464-2.



Figure 22. Engraving of Thomas Aquinas.

Aquinas also developed a spiritual alchemy of the soul. He believed the human soul is an incorruptible whole that was fully capable of existing apart from the body. But the substance or *spiritus* of the soul is not a material substance like the body, although it is united in time to a body and is what animates it. "Soul," Aquinas summarized, "is the first principle of life."

Because pure Intellect is part of the incorporeal soul, it does not use the bodily organs but, Aquinas reasoned, "follows the mode of its being." What he meant was that to be able to understand universals, which are immaterial, the soul must be immaterial. In other words, a receiver receives things according to its own nature, so for soul ("the receiver") to understand ("receive") universals, it must have the same nature as the universals.

Aquinas was a prolific writer, but after having a mystical experience on December 6, 1273, he never wrote another word. As a result, several of his most important works (including *Summa*) end abruptly in the middle of a paragraph. He told his fellow monks that while meditating, he had seen a vision of the virgin Sophia surrounded by light – the divine feminine principle suppressed by the patriarchal Church. Sophia is one of the monadic emanations in Gnostic teachings and is associated with the *Anima Mundi* (or "Universal Soul"), the Bride of Christ, and the Holy Ghost of the Trinity.

Aquinas said he had found the ultimate truth in the silent wisdom of Sophia, and after that profound experience, everything he had written seemed irrelevant. "I cannot write anymore," he explained to his assistant, "because all that I have written seems like straw to me."

Ramon Llull

Ramon Llull (1232-1315), also known as Raymond Lully, was a spiritual alchemist from the Kingdom of Majorca who wrote in the Latin, Catalan, and Arabic languages. A prolific author, Llull lived a licentious life writing poems and songs to the many women he loved. But in 1263, he had a series of profound visions of Jesus Christ on the cross floating in mid-air that changed his life.⁴¹

⁴¹ Pereira, Michela (1989). *The Alchemical Corpus Attributed to Raymond Lull*. London: The Warburg Institute.



Figure 23. Ramon Llull, aka Raymond Lully.

Stirred by his visions, Llull promised to give up his soul and identity for the sake of divine love. He also vowed to convert Muslims to Christianity and write a book detailing the errors of nonbelievers. He sold all his possessions and set out on a holy pilgrimage to various shrines. In 1270, he returned to establish the Hermitage of the Holy Trinity in Mallorca.

Around 1273, Llull wrote a book on contemplative meditation called *Libre de Contemplació en Déu* (or “Book on Divine Contemplation”), a detailed guide to finding truth in meditation. The following year, during his contemplation on the divine Source, a complex philosophical system was transmitted to him he called “the Art,” which consists of a set of general principles tied by combinatorial logic and illustrated by diagrams.

Llull’s innovative work foreshadowed the modern disciplines of social choice theory and computational theory. The “Art” would be the prime motivation

behind his remaining years, as he traveled throughout Europe meeting with popes, kings, and dignitaries to implement his ideas.

The writings of 13th-century alchemists like Ramon Llull and Paul Taranto, as well as the emphasis on genuine spiritual transformation exemplified in the books of authors like Thomas Aquinas, the idea spread that alchemy might be a kind of ancient spiritual technology that could heal the human soul.

In his book, *Alchemy: Science of the Cosmos, Science of the Soul*, Swiss scholar Titus Burckhardt (1908-1984) noted that by the end of the 13th century in Europe, alchemy was recognized as a spiritual discipline based on Hermetic principles of macrocosmic-microcosmic correspondences and the pervasive idea that if one could learn how to transmute lead into gold, one could use the same technique to purify and heal the human soul, which had been divided since the fall of Adam. By unifying or integrating the split in their souls, alchemists could be reunited with God.⁴²

⁴² Burckhardt, Titus. *Alchemy: Science of the Cosmos, Science of the Soul*. Translated by William Stoddart. Penguin. (1967). ISBN 978-0-906540-96-1. p.149.

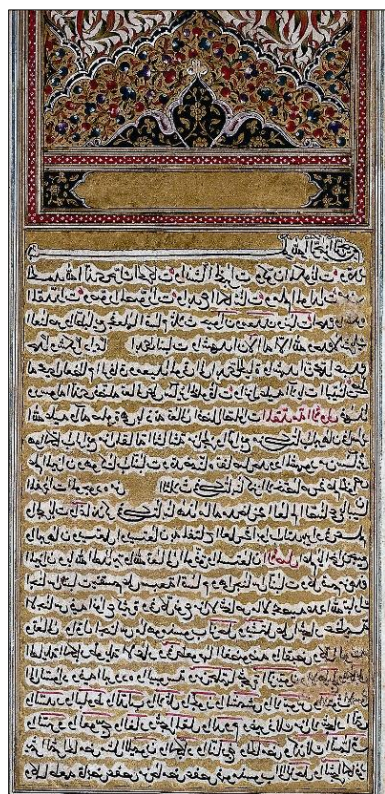


Figure 24. Al-Jaldaki's treatise "Secrets of the Balance."

The Persian alchemist Aydamar ibn al-Jaldaki, known simply as "al-Jaldaki," traveled for seventeen years before settling in the Mamluk Sultanate in Egypt, where he died in 1342. He is thought to have written 26 treatises about alchemy. Most modern authorities consider him a scientific writer on chemistry, but recent evidence suggests he combined the pragmatic and spiritual views of alchemy in one unified practice.

Jaldaki's work is featured in the compilation *Ilm al-Sina'ah al-Ilāhiyah* (or "The Science of Divine Alchemy"), whose theme is that alchemy is a spiritual science, a "divine secret" passed down in the light of prayer and meditation.

And French scholar Henry Corbin used the writings of Jaldaki to show that Islamic alchemy was an *Ars Hieratica*, that is, a sacred art practiced simultaneously on the spiritual and material levels. In other words, alchemists sought to understand and work with the "hidden continuity between all bodies, from the mineral to the divine." Those who choose to study alchemy from the dual viewpoints of science and religion, noted Corbin, are ignoring the historic tendency in alchemy towards the nondual unification of its material and spiritual aspects.⁴³

Petrus Bonus

Petrus Bonus (Latin for "Peter the Good") was a 14th Century Italian alchemist (also known by his Italian name, Pietro Buono). He was born in Ferrara in Lombardy, northern Italy, and is sometimes called Bonus of Ferrara. Bonus is best known for his book *Margarita Preciosa Novella* (or "Precious New Pearl"), which was a popular alchemical text first published in 1338. Bonus notes that he started writing the book in 1330 in the town of Pola (or Pula) in Istria.

In his book, Bonus discusses the works of numerous ancient philosophers and practicing alchemists, including Aristotle, Avicenna, Geber, Rasis, Haly, and Morienus. He also discusses alchemical terminology and symbology and refutes arguments against alchemy.

⁴³ Henry Corbin, Liadain Sherrard, and Philip Sherrard. *History of Islamic Philosophy*. Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, London, 2014.

Bonus states that the “whole of the alchemical art can be taught in a single day, but the key is “mercury.” It is unclear if he means the metal quicksilver or mercury as a symbol for consciousness. He admits he had himself not yet penetrated the secret entirely and is engaged in meditation to find the Philosopher’s Stone. He did, however, conclude that alchemy is a “physico-spiritual art” he described as “in part natural and in part divine or super-natural”.

~ see Figure 25 on next page ~

The painting on the next page is from the cover of *Precious New Pearl* on a 16th-century Spanish edition. A red sphere containing a bird wrestling a serpent marks the entry to the Great Work. In the courtyard are personifications of philosophic Sulfur (indicated by the Sun) and Mercury (indicated by the Moon) point towards the entrance to a great labyrinth.

Three walls (the three phases of the Work) form the labyrinth, which represents not only the operations of practical alchemy leading to the Elixir but also the spiritual journey of the alchemist’s soul to divine redemption.

The first wall (*Nigredo*) begins under the sign of Aries and shows a decayed corpse. Both the Ram of Aries and the corpse are painted on the first wall. A young alchemist points towards the entrance to the second wall (*Albedo*), which is under the sign of Leo (the Lion painted on the second wall). The Lion represents the conjunction of Mercury and Sulfur (or Spirit and Soul) depicted as the two figures embracing in midair. An older alchemist points towards the entrance to the third red wall (*Rubedo*), which is under the sign of Sagittarius (the Centaur painted on the third wall).

To enter here, one must pass through the Fire of pure consciousness. Once inside, the married King and Queen point jointly towards the Tree of Knowledge. To the left is the conjuncted Sun and Moon, and to the right, seven stars shine (the completed operations of alchemy). From the Tree of Knowledge, the resurrected red body emerges, risen from the blackness of *Nigredo* by the alchemy of Fire and divine light.

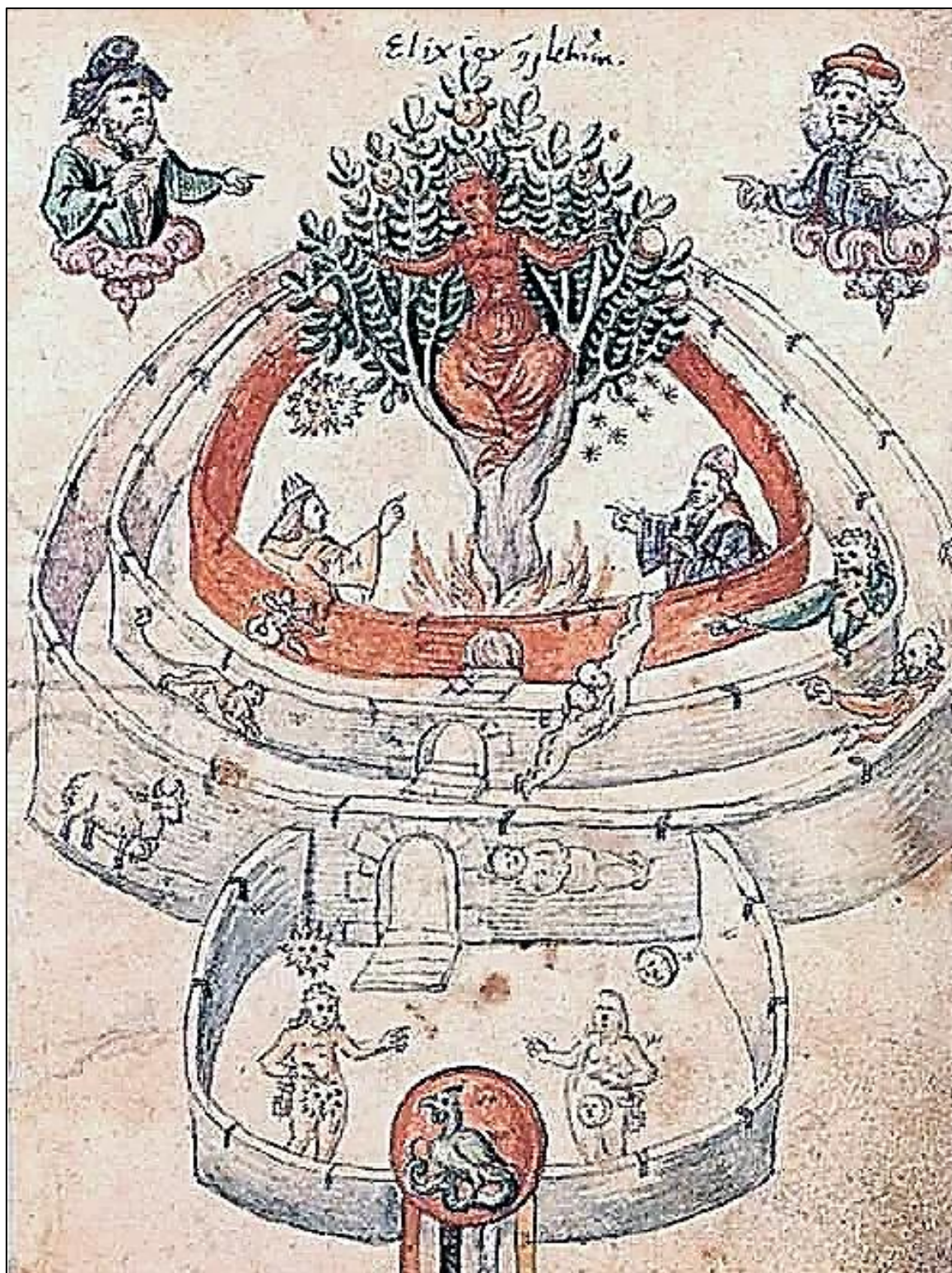


Figure 25. Cover of 16th-century Spanish edition of *Precious New Pearl*.

The Renaissance

The Renaissance (1400-1600) was a period in European history characterized by the rebirth of classical wisdom and the repudiation of Medieval scholasticism and religious dogma. The Platonic and Hermetic principles of alchemy were restored, and many alchemists moved away from working in the “outer” chemical laboratory to spending their time in meditation in the “inner” spiritual laboratory, where the Hermetic vessel was the human soul. At the same time, new esoteric systems developed that merged alchemy with magic, astrology, Kabbalah, and other “occult” (ie., “hidden or secret”) traditions.⁴⁴

Paracelsus

Considered the “Father of Modern Medicine,” Swiss-born Paracelsus (1493-1541) was an itinerant alchemist who rode around Europe on a great white horse, carrying a sword topped by small vial of Azoth, the fabled universal medicine. He stopped at university towns to lecture or engage in vitriolic conversations with medical faculties on the errors of their methods.

Paracelsus was the first doctor to use mercury to treat syphilis, a new disease ravaging Europe, cautioning physicians that “the poison is in the dose.” He also urged doctors to listen to women skilled in healing and called on women to try to understand the workings of their bodies and not rely on the pronouncements of male doctors.

Philosophically, Paracelsus believed consciousness was the active force of Nature behind all alchemical transformations. His laboratory work was guided by the principle that *spiritus* – the “new matter of transmutation” – was somehow present in the Secret Fire of the alchemist’s own consciousness: “The Matter is contained in the Secret Fire,” he wrote, “and comes into being in the Occult Vessel.” That harkens back to Maria Prophetissa’s concept of the Hermetic Vessel as the esoteric body or container of *spiritus*.

According to Paracelsus, transformation was only possible by stripping away the outer form of a substance to reveal its First Matter and then projecting the singular light of pure consciousness to transform it into something new. The reason this is possible is that the microcosm and macrocosm are united within the light of One Mind, and the human mind is the focal point through which Nature can manifest.

Specifically, Paracelsus believed a person could achieve union with the divine mind by focusing on the infinite nature of their own consciousness and moving from the realm of worldly illusion to that of permanent truth. For Paracelsus, the fabled Philosopher’s Stone was a state of higher consciousness that revealed the true nature of reality to anyone who possessed it.

⁴⁴ Forshaw, Peter J. “Chemistry, That Starry Science” – Early Modern Conjunctions of Astrology and Alchemy’ (2013); and “Chemia Cabalistica – Early Modern Alchemists and Cabala” (2013).



Figure 26. Portrait of Theophrastus Bombastus von Hohenheim (Paracelsus).

“Only when the illusion of self has disappeared from my heart and mind,” he explained, “and my consciousness risen to that state in which there is no more personal self, then, will I not be the doer of works and will not that spirit of wisdom perform its wonders through my instrumentality?”

Paracelsus was convinced that a disciplined imagination – the light of mind – was the key to transforming reality. “Imagination is a great power,” he wrote, “and if the world knew what strange things can be produced by the power of the imagination, the public authorities would force idle people to stop daydreaming and keep busy at work.”

“The power of the imagination is a great factor in medicine,” Paracelsus said. “It may produce diseases in mans, and it may cure them. Ills of the body may be cured by physical

remedies or by the power of the spirit acting through the soul. The spirit is the master; imagination the tool, and the body the plastic material.”

Paracelsus believed the source of light within us originated from the heavenly macrocosm above. “To understand correctly the meaning of the words Alchemy and Astrology,” he said, “it is necessary to understand and to realize the intimate relationship and identity of the Microcosm and Macrocosm, and their mutual interaction. . . There is in each person, in every animal, bird and plant a star which mirrors, matches or is in some sense the same as a star in the heavens. . . Man is a microcosm, or a little world, because he is an extract from all the stars and planets of the whole firmament, from the earth and the elements; and so he is their quintessence.”

Paracelsus saw alchemy as an evolutionary art that reduced things to their basic forms so that they could be transformed. “Alchemy is the art that separates what is useful from what is not,” he said, “by transforming it into its ultimate matter and essence.” He saw the same evolutionary process in Nature. “Death is the midwife of very great things,” he noted. It brings about the birth and rebirth of forms a thousand times improved. This is the highest mystery of God.”

Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa



Figure 27. Engraving of Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa.

Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa (1486–1535) was a German esotericist who was instrumental in restoring the Hermetic foundation of alchemy. In his works, he blended alchemy with Hermeticism, astrology, Kabbalah, theurgy, and Christian mysticism.

Agrippa led a wandering life and studied Hermeticism in Germany, France, and Italy. He joined a few Hermetic groups and probably participated in their ceremonies. During his studies, he held a number of jobs to support himself, including physician, lawyer, soldier, theologian, and philosopher. Many times in his travels, Agrippa was accused of spreading heresy, but he was never sent to jail.

Agrippa's influential book series, *De Occulta Philosophia* (or "On Occult Philosophy") appeared in three volumes. Volume 1 was published in Paris in 1531, and volumes 2 and 3 were published in Cologne in 1533. In the books, Agrippa argued for a Neoplatonic interpretation of alchemy that bridged the manifested world and its divine

source. He viewed alchemy as a kind of "natural magic" in which the consciousness of the alchemist participated in physical transformations that originated in the Hermetic One Mind.⁴⁵

Basil Valentine

Basilus Valentinus (also known as Basil Valentine) was a secretive German alchemist. Some authorities identify him as the Canon of the Benedictine Priory of Saint Peter in Erfurt, Germany, while others attribute his writings to Johann Thölde (1565-1624), a German salt manufacturer.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Goodrick-Clarke, Nicholas. *The Western Esoteric Traditions: A Historical Introduction*. Oxford University Press. 2008. p.60; Magee, Glenn Alexander. *Hegel and the Hermetic Tradition*. Cornell University Press. 2008. p.30.

⁴⁶ Valentinus, Basilus. "Triumph-Wagen Antimonii". Othmer Library Catalog. Science History Institute; Valentinus, Basilus. "Of natural and supernatural things". Othmer Library Catalog. Science History Institute; Valentinus, Basilus (1671) [original date unknown]. *The last will and testament of Basil Valentine, monk of the order of St. Bennet*. Translated by Worlidge, Johannes (1st ed.). London: S. G. and B. G. for Edward Brewster; Principe, Lawrence M. (2013). *The Secrets of Alchemy*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press. ISBN 9780226923789.



Figure 28. Engraving of Basil Valentine from *Chymische Schrifften Basilus Valentinus* (1717). The frame reads: "Frater Basil Valentine, monk of the Benedictine Order and Philosopher".

Whoever he was, Basil Valentine was an accomplished alchemist who documented procedures for producing ammonia, ethyl chloride, hydrochloric acid, and sulfuric acid. He also wrote several important books, including *The Azoth of the Philosophers* (1559), *The Twelve Keys of Basil Valentine* (1599), *Of the Great Stone of the Ancients* (1599), *Triumphal Chariot of Antimony* (1604), *Of Natural and Supernatural Things* (1605), and *Of the Microcosm, the Great Secrecy of the World, and the Human Medicine* (1609).

Several of these texts by Valentine are blends of practical and spiritual alchemy that also touch on psychological methods of personal transformation. In practice, some of the most powerful "working meditations" in *Mental Alchemy* deal with the transformation of individuals using operations that are also part of practical laboratory work.

The Azoth Meditation Emblem

One of the best examples of using disciplined imagination for psychological and spiritual transformation is a meditative emblem known as the *Le Azoth des Philosophes* (or "The Azoth of the Philosophers") by Basil Valentine. Published in 1659, it became a powerful tool for personal transformation among alchemists during the Renaissance and into modern times.

In the Azoth drawing (shown below), the dominant circle and its center point form the symbol of a circle with a centerpoint that also stands for the Sun, the Monad, and gold. At its centerpoint is the face of a bearded alchemist at the beginning of the Great Work. Like looking into a mirror, this is where the alchemist fixes their attention to begin the meditation.

The downward-pointing triangle superimposed over the alchemist's face is the cipher for Water—in the sense of divine grace pouring down from heaven. Within that triangle is the face of God at the end of the work. This central image is both the beginning and end (the "A" and "Z" or "Alpha and Omega") of the work with the Azoth.



The juxtaposition of the face of the alchemists and the face of God implies that they are potentially the same – both creators of reality. Such blasphemous ideas explain why copies of this drawing were circulated secretly among alchemists for decades before being published openly in 1659.

In the Azoth drawing, the schematic body of the alchemist is shown in perfect balance with the Four Elements. His right foot is firmly planted on Earth and his left is in Water. In his right hand is a torch of Fire, and in his left hand an ostrich feather symbolizing Air. He also stands balanced between the archetypal masculine and feminine powers in the background – *Sol* and *Luna*.

Sol, the archetypal Sun King, is seated on a lion to the figure's right; *Luna*, the archetypal Moon Queen, is seated on a great fish in the ocean to his left. *Sol* wields a scepter and a shield, indicating his authority and power over the visible world, but the fiery dragon of the suppressed contents of his subconscious waits patiently hidden in a cave beneath him.

Luna holds the reins to a great fish, symbolizing her control of the forces of Nature, and behind her is a chaff of wheat, which stands for her connection to fertility and growth. The bow and arrow she cradles in her left arm symbolize the wounds of the heart and body she accepts as part of her existence.

Between the legs of the alchemist is a small cube labeled *Corpus*, meaning "physical body." The five stars surrounding it indicate that the body also contains the hidden Fifth Element, the invisible Quintessence or life force.

Where the head of the alchemist should be, there is a mysterious winged symbol similar to the *Behdety*, the winged god of the midday Sun from ancient Egypt. This represents the Ascended Essence, the purified soul about to leave the body in a higher incarnation of light.

Touching the wings of the Ascended Essence are a salamander engulfed in flames on the left side of the drawing and a standing bird on the right. Below the salamander is the inscription *Anima* ("Soul"); below the bird is the inscription *Spiritus* ("Spirit").

In Valentine's alchemy, Soul and Spirit are closely intertwined, and constantly change into one another, like the Chinese concept of Yin (as Soul) and Yang (as Spirit). In this case, Valentine shows Spirit (*Spiritus*) associated with the Moon, and Soul (*Anima*) with the Sun. Most alchemists took an opposite, more static view of Sun-Spirit and Moon-Soul.

Spiritus, *Anima*, and *Corpus* ("Spirit, Soul, and Body") form a large, inverted triangle that stands behind the central emblem of the alchemist. Together, they symbolize the archetypal Three Essentials the alchemists named Sulfur (or spirit-energy), Mercury (or soul-light), and Salt (or matter-body), respectively.

This version of the Azoth drawing shows the true Copernican order of the planets and is the one most popular among psychologists and spiritual alchemists today. It reflects the transmutation of the metals from lead to gold along the Ladder of the Planets. The original version reflected the Ptolemaic order with the Earth at the center of the cosmos and the Sun orbiting the Earth in fourth position between Mars and Venus. That traditional version is still used in initiatic ceremonies in Hermetic fraternities.

In the following pages, we will be performing a visual meditation performed with this same drawing for hundreds of years by alchemists. In many ways, the drawing provided the therapeutic functions of a psychologist today. Certainly, the deeply introspective work of master alchemists connected with many of the same archetypes in consciousness that formed the basis of contemporary psychology.

Psychologists Herbert Silberer (1882-1923) and Carl Jung (1875-1961) were among the first to recognize the roots of alchemy in the modern discipline of psychology. In his treatise *Azoth* (1893), Silberer stated: "Alchemical literature deals primarily at least with the conscious intelligence of man, and with the unevolved possibilities of the body and mind of humanity."

The Azoth Meditation

The *Azoth* is a guided visual meditation to discovering the “Universal Mercury” or animating spirit of light hidden in matter (and our bodies) that makes transformation possible. The “A” and “Z” in the word convey the idea of something complete and all-encompassing – everything from “A to Z” or “alpha to omega.”

As you work through the Azoth, remember, the light of your *imagination* is the tool that brings this drawing to life. Try to form a mental dialogue with the figures in this drawing. Each caricature embodies secret information about the overall process within the Azoth. Each alchemical cipher is placed precisely where its archetypal energies come into play in the operations of transformation.

The seven rays placed in a circular pattern around the face of the alchemist is the Ladder of the Planets and indicate the progressive level of transformation. Numbered from one to seven, each ray contains the corresponding planetary cipher and its metal. Next to each ray is a “roundel,” which is a circle containing an action scene that explains part of a story. In other words, each roundel elaborates on the meaning of the operation being performed.

1. The Ray of Saturn



The first ray in the Azoth is the black ray pointing downward labeled “1.” This is the beginning of the Ladder of the Planets, and it is marked by the cipher that stands for both the metal lead and the planet Saturn, which is the archetypal situation at the beginning of the Great Work. Also shown in the first ray is a small square representing Salt (or Matter), which is one of the Three Essentials. This suggests the Great Work begins in the unredeemed body or imperfect matter.

The first roundel (between rays 1 and 2) shows a black crow perching on top of a skull. Next to it on the outer ring is the Latin word *Visita*, which means “to visit or start a journey.” Black crows are symbols of the initial *Nigredo* (the alchemical “Black Phase”) during which the subject of

transformation is purified by breaking it down during the mortification operation of calcination.

The Saturn-lead archetype in alchemy is the most complicated because it represents both the beginning and end of the Great Work. It is the first step on the Ladder of the Planets and the last step on the return journey to the stars in a whole new octave of creation. Similarly, the Saturn-lead component of your personal temperament will take the most effort to fully understand.

As soon as silvery bright lead metal is exposed to air, it forms a dull-gray oxide layer called the “litharge” that resists further chemical interaction. Air is associated with spiritual energy, and lead reacts to it by instantly forming a barrier blocking any further interaction.

The lusterless lead metal born of Saturn is so dead, it is used as shields against sound, light, and radiation. It is also used for containers for acids – like traditional automobile batteries – and as a lining in pipes that carry corrosive substances. Similarly, the lead-tempered person is like an acid-proof container that stores up caustic feelings and anger. They tend to be “acid tongued” and “vitriolic.”

On the psychological level, lead is symbolic of a person’s inertness and unwillingness to change. There is a denial of higher spiritual energies, and alchemists often portrayed the leaden person lying in a grave or hopelessly chained to matter in some way. This is the negative, selfish, manipulative part of your personality that is very real and active but which you try to suppress or hide in the shadows.

Nonetheless, the stubborn, egocentric leaden core of such people carries all the energy they will ever need to complete their personal transformation. Just as finely pulverized lead in a vacuum spontaneously consumes itself in pure fire, we all carry this deeply hidden potential power for instant transformation within us.

The leaden person is someone who has, like Saturn, lost their bid to become a star. They have accepted their caste in life and are resigned to a mundane physical existence. The black messenger crow of Chronos (“Father Time”) that haunts such a person brings black moods, chthonic depression, and despair, but also alerts us to illusion and fakeness in our lives.

There are many negative traits associated with the Saturn-lead personality. Leaden people seem lazy, stubborn and unyielding, and try to control other people passively-aggressively. Saturnic people must always be right, rarely accept blame or admit to their mistakes, and have no real regard for the deeper truths of a situation.

In general, leaden people may be religious but not really spiritual. They tend to be suspicious of genius and inspiration, which they often attribute to fantasy. They feel threatened by freedom of expression and sometimes use ridicule or try to “push people’s buttons” to dampen others’ moments of inspiration or creativity. On the surface, Saturnic types tend to be unimaginative, judgmental, and smug.

On the other hand, the positive characteristics of the saturnian person are patience, responsibility, somberness, structure, realism, and deep knowledge of history and awareness of karma. Leaden people are grounded, earthy, and practical, and are good friends during times of bereavement – a rock of support at funerals and deathbeds. They have no illusions about their situation or about the motives of other people. Since they do not believe people can change, they are surprisingly accepting of faults in friends and family.

Secretly, leaden people crave stimulation, excitement, and drama. They gravitate to reckless people who bring energy and entertainment into their lives. This craving for stimulation sometimes makes the leaden person follow their own nervous energy rather than genuine inspiration.

2. The Ray of Jupiter



The second ray is marked with the symbol that stands for both the metal tin and the planet Jupiter. And the corresponding roundel depicts the black crow watching itself being dissolved.

The word on the outer ring near this roundel is *Interiora*, referring to the “interior or innermost parts.” The operation at this stage is a further process of mortification known as dissolution.

Jupiter is the largest and most impressive planet in our solar system, but it’s mostly gas. The planet’s name is the root of the word “jovial” or cheerful, and the energies of Jupiter are expansive, even joyful, but tend to be lacking in depth. That is true of their tinny metallic temperament too.

Jupiterian people are often inflated, expansive, and pompous. They tend to talk endlessly about obvious or mundane things and can be perceived as thoughtless, shallow, and licentious.

Jupiterians are often judgmental and feel they can do no wrong. They are aware of spiritual forces but are unable to access them because of lack of integrity.

Methods of transforming the tin temperament includes such things as finding their balancing soul mate, working relentlessly with psychological techniques, learning to relax deeply, and meditating to find their genuine identity. Psychologically, the focus of the tin temperament is on sensuality, and there is a greater interaction with others than seen in the leaden Saturnic person. Still, most of the control at this level comes from unconscious impulses.

As the tin archetype is transformed, a person is dominated by dreams and powerful undercurrents of emotion. Only by integrating the contents of their unconscious can tin people be successfully transmuted into nobler metal.

Jupiterian people tend to suffer from emotional knots or blockages in their bodies that cause symptoms of armoring reminiscent of the “tinman.” These blockages have both a psychic and a physiological reality, and often it is necessary to seek outside assistance to achieve greater flexibility – in both mind and body.

3. The Ray of Mars



The cipher signifying both the metal iron and the planet Mars marks the third ray of the Azoth, which is also marked with a smaller symbol denoting Sulfur (or Energy), another of the Three Essentials. Iron and sulfur combine naturally in vitriol, a sulfuric acid compound that forms on weathered sulfur-bearing rocks. Sulfuric acid is the aggressive “liquid fire” so prized by alchemists.

The third roundel depicts the alchemical operation of separation. The black, earth-bound crow splits into two white or purified birds (soul and spirit) that retrieve the saved remains from the earlier operations. This is the first coming together of soul and spirit and represents the beginning of the *Albedo* (“White Phase”) of purification. In the ring above this roundel is written *Terra*, meaning “of the earth” and refers to the useful essences being separated out from the dregs of matter at this stage.

Mars and iron rule the aggressive impulses in us – both individually and collectively. Within the individual, the iron temperament governs the characteristics of anger, uncontrolled and aggressive self-assertion, lust for power, ego identity, willful determination, passion, and courage. It is our challenge to transform the Mars within us into the expression of spiritual qualities, rather than the selfish fulfillment of ego ambitions or physical desires.

On the positive side, iron loves air, as demonstrated by the impervious layer of orange iron oxide (or rust) that forms on it when exposed to air. The iron temperament naturally seeks higher inspiration and fresh influx of airy spirit.

The Martian archetype reinforces individuality, strengthens will, and helps surpass previous limitations. The red planet governs the animal soul, passions, and the survival instinct.

In psychological terms, the iron temperament is the seat of our will to power, desire to control others, and our concerns about providing for one’s physical needs in the world.

By transmuting iron, we learn to assert ourselves without dominating or submitting to others. We gain insight into our behavior and become aware of the forces of soul within. The iron temperament makes us determined and hard, but like the metal iron, the iron temperament is inflexible and brittle and cracks or breaks if bent too far.

The paradox of iron is that it is only through iron can we marshal the energies necessary to transmute iron. That is born out in the signature of the most revered arcanum, the ancient chemical of transformation, vitriol, which is a combination of iron and sulfuric acid. It is the active Vitriol (or activated willpower) within us that will transform us; without it, all is lost to complacency.

4. The Ray of Venus



The Azoth's fourth ray is marked with the cipher that stands for both copper and Venus. Its roundel depicts the twin birds of soul and spirit leaving the earth together, lifting a five-spiked crown which represents the Fifth Element or Quintessence recovered from the preceding operations. At this point in the work, the operation of conjunction

begins, which recombines the saved essences of soul and spirit in a new incarnation.

In the ring above the fourth roundel is inscribed the word *Rectificando*, which means "setting things right." This is the turning point when the matter of the Work begins the process of spiritization.

The Venus-copper archetype is another complicated constellation of forces in a person's temperament. The veiled planet Venus represents refinement of the senses, the arts, mystical love, desire, and earthly relationships.

Psychologically, the Venusian signature in the personality drives us to evaluate experiences through inner, subjective, feminine ways of knowing. Without the Venusian influence, we would have to rely totally on our objective senses and animal minds to evaluate others. Even intuition would not be able to function without the channel of Venus to bring it to conscious awareness.

Copper was known as the “harlot of the metals” because it combined with so many other metals. The copper temperament is associated with the powers of touch and sensuality, intimate communication, deep feelings, and a cultured mind. Copper needs to work with the element Earth (body-matter), but wrong Earth or too much Earth here produces someone who is lustfully materialistic and licentious.

For the work in Venus to succeed, copper must move to the higher frequency or higher octave of “unconditional love” — a love that embraces all creation and is totally accepting without discrimination or judgment. While many of us strive to attain unconditional love of others and ourselves, we must first travel with Venus and feel copper in our veins to learn love on the personal level. Until we have had the experiences that Venus brings us through relationships, either with people or things, we cannot reach the expanded consciousness that transpersonal love promises.

The two archetypes of Venus and Mars complement each other perfectly and work as a polarity, manifesting the tension and desire between the masculine and feminine. Venus is the feminine goddess of love and beauty just as her counterpart, Mars, is the masculine god of war and strife. Together, these mythic archetypes offer a complete picture of human existence on the material and emotional levels.

In depth psychology, Venus and Mars are often defined as the *Anima* (feminine soul) and *Animus* (masculine spirit), respectively. Until a person can bring both forces into conscious awareness and learn to balance and accept them fully, they cannot be a complete individual. If we suppress or deny one of these forces within us, we create destructive energy in the subconscious shadows that will manifest in self-defeating behaviors.

In alchemical terms, the Mars-Venus relationship culminates in the sacred marriage of the Sun and Moon or the archetypal duality of the King and Queen. On the personal level, this is the coming together of the forces of soul and spirit in conscious awareness – the union of the logical solar and intuitive lunar ways of knowing in an individual.

In Jungian terms, it is the “integration” of one’s personality that results in a balanced, mature yet spontaneous individual who understands the nature of public “self” versus true “Self” in themselves and their relationships with other people.

5. The Ray of Mercury



In the fifth ray, the cipher for both metallic mercury (quicksilver) and the planet Mercury appears, as well as an identical smaller symbol indicating the principle of Mercury (or Light), also one of the Three Essentials.

The fifth roundel is located under the inscription *Invenies* (“you will discover”). In this operation of fermentation, the essences of soul and spirit have come together to create a new life, which is the beginning of the *Rubedo* (“Red Phase”) of empowerment. The corresponding roundel shows the birds of soul and spirit nesting in a tree, brooding over their alchemical Egg, the fetal “Child of the Conjunction.”

Mercury represents light and consciousness in the individual. It is the source of transformation within the Personal Monad or microcosm, just as the One Mind or Greater Monad is the source of everything in the macrocosm. As Mercury is purified and transmuted in a person, a sense of self-trust and sublimity is manifested. There is a new presence of unlimited sustenance and potential within them.

This stage is announced in the laboratory by the appearance of a white layer of digesting bacteria on the black fermenting matter. The corresponding spiritual work in the mind of the alchemist is dominated by surreal imagery that carries meaningful metaphysical information difficult to put into words.

Psychologically, the forces of Mercury in a person's temperament yearn for archetypal Sulfur (inner Energy) in order to manifest an idea or vision. Quicksilver seeks union with elemental sulfur in the same way – the quicksilver and sulfur immediately clump together in a new compound.

But Sulfur here is not elemental sulfur – it is intellectual passion, not worldly emotions. The wrong Sulfur at this point produces someone who is spiritually immature yet suffers from a superiority complex, someone who uses their inherent spirituality for personal gain or control of others.

6. The Ray of the Moon



The sixth ray contains the symbol that stands for both the metal silver and the Moon, which is the level of magical manifestation in the Azoth. Distillation is the operation at this stage. Above the roundel is the word *Occultum*, meaning "secret or hidden," because the essences at this stage are carried invisibly by the distilling vapors.

In the sixth roundel, we see an imaginary unicorn lying peacefully on the ground in front of a rose bush. According to legend, the unicorn runs tirelessly from pursuers but lies meekly on the ground when approached by a virgin. The virgin symbolizes the purified matter at this stage, which has returned to a state of innocence and potential.

After Mercury comes alive (or is “animated” in alchemical parlance), the work of personal transformation proceeds at a faster pace, as the transmutation of the noble metals in one’s temperament takes place. The transmutation of silver in a person produces a lasting mystical state purified of habitual or egotistic forces. Intuition reaches its highest state of expression, and the mind begins to move beyond the limitations of time and space.

In the last stages of transmutation, a sublimation of spiritual forces occurs which lays the groundwork for the formation of a “Stellar Body” (what Paracelsus called the “Astral Body”) in which reflected inner moonlight becomes flesh in the next and final position on the Azoth.

7. The Ray of the Sun



In the seventh ray, the Monad cipher stands for both gold and the Sun. The final roundel shows an androgynous, naked youth emerging from an opened grave, with the word *Lapidem* (“the Stone”) on the outer ring next to it. This stage of transformation is coagulation, in which the Philosopher’s Stone is manifested if all the previous operations were successful.

For those who suffer with weaker wills or loss of contact with the divine presence, gold represents a powerful psychological cure. The solar essences encourage hope, ambition, courage, self-reliance, dignity, authority, and the ability to manage oneself and others.

The creative light within us, no matter how small and insignificant it is, can be enhanced to a great degree by tapping into the solar archetype. Just as the Sun represents the divine creative force in our solar system, gold represents the same thing in our inner temperament or Personal Monad. For lasting manifestation, the golden temperament needs to be firmly grounded in the physical world.

Alchemists viewed this final accomplishment in the Great Work as the creation of a new kind of matter they referred

to as the Philosopher's Stone. To them, it was not just a state of purified consciousness but an indestructible, solidified presence of pure light and awareness in the individual. It was a new kind of matter they called the *Ultima Materia* ("Ultimate Matter") as opposed to the chaotic and corrupted *Prima Materia* ("First Matter") at the beginning of the Work.

A Hidden Message

There is one final hidden message in the Azoth drawing. The Latin words in the outer ring spell out a summary of what has taken place: *Visita Interiora Terra Rectificando Invenies Occultum Lapidem*. It translates as "Visit the innermost parts of the earth; and by setting things right, you will find the hidden Stone."

Also, the first letters of the seven Latin words spell out the word "VITRIOL," which is the aggressive sulfuric acid we discussed in the Ray of Mars. The liquid fire of sulfuric acid is the fundamental agent of change in most alchemical experiments and is symbolic of the Secret Fire in the soul that fuels the urge for spiritual perfection that ultimately results in the formation of the Philosopher's Stone.

That completes the workings with the Azoth *Mandala*. The whole point of this exercise – performed for centuries by spiritual seekers on all levels of initiation – is to bring alive the planetary archetypes active in consciousness and work with them.

The Geometric Meditations of John Dee

English alchemist John Dee (1527-1608) – whose laboratory and library of alchemical texts rivaled any in the world – developed a spiritual alchemy based on visualizing an iconographic symbol he dubbed the "Hieroglyphic Monad." Dee packed all the most meaningful archetypes of alchemy into a single cipher.

For Dee, his image represented the One Mind that contained the totality of all things – and its secrets could be revealed in meditation. Dee said his proof would "revolutionize astronomy, alchemy, mathematics, linguistics, mechanics, music, optics, magic, and esoteric adeptship." He urged astronomers to stop peering through their telescopes and instead, spend their time meditating on his Monad

In 1564, Dee completed a step-by-step proof using Euclidean geometry to create his Hieroglyphic Monad, a cryptic symbol that contained all the planetary ciphers in their correct dynamic relationships. “It is the force behind the evolution of life,” Dee said of his Monad, “and the universal binding power which unites minds and souls in human oneness.”

Dee revived the Pythagorean notion of the Monad to explain the role of consciousness in the universe. He defined the Monad as the mind that contained the totality of all things and described it as “the force behind the evolution of life and the universal binding power which unites minds and souls in a human oneness.”

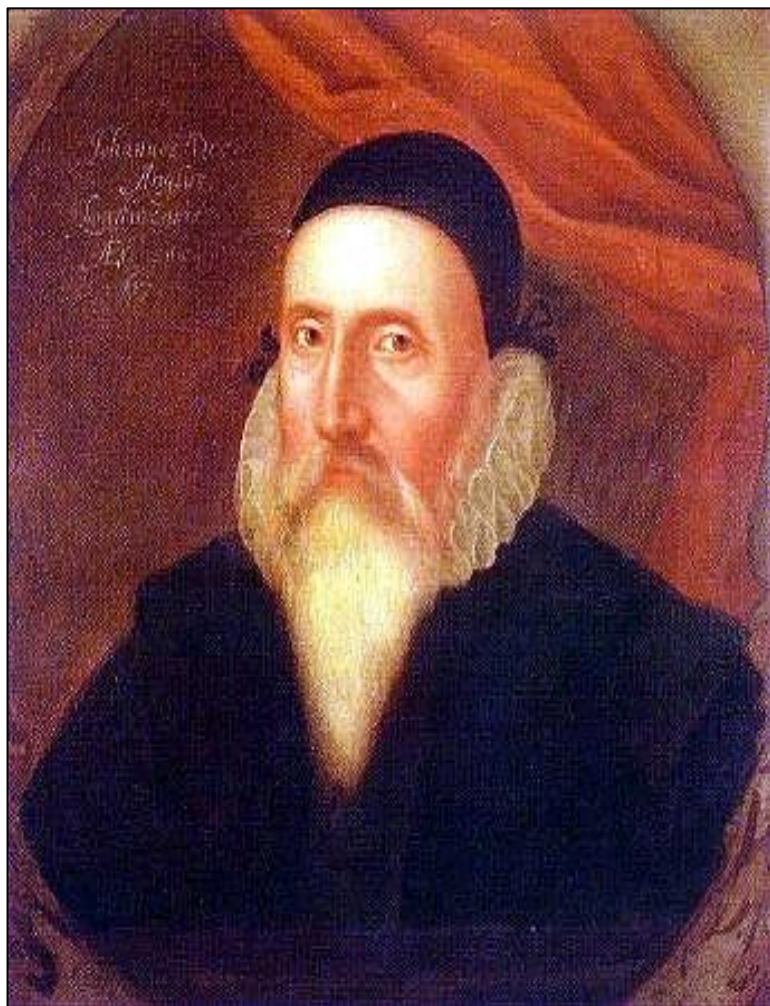


Figure 29. Portrait of Dr. John Dee.

In other words, Dee created his monad icon to “ground” the reality of the Monad in the natural world and lay bare its fundamental principles.

After seven years of research and meditation, Dee completed a step-by-step proof using Euclidean geometry to create his “Hieroglyphic Monad.” The word



“hieroglyphic” in the title refers to the fact that Dee used cryptic ciphers to create a new pictographic symbol built around the ancient symbol for the Monad (shown at right). He placed all the ciphers for the planet-metal archetypes from alchemy in their proper relationship to create the super-cipher of the Hieroglyphic Monad.

In Theorem XVIII of his proof, Dee described the power of his Monad: “Before we raise our eyes to heaven — illuminated by the contemplation of these mysteries — we could perceive very

exactly the constitution of our Monad as it is shown to us, not only in the light of mind but also in life and Nature, for it discloses explicitly, by its inner movement, the most secret mysteries of physical analysis.”

In his book *The Gnostics* (1987), British Hermetic scholar Tobias Churton explained:

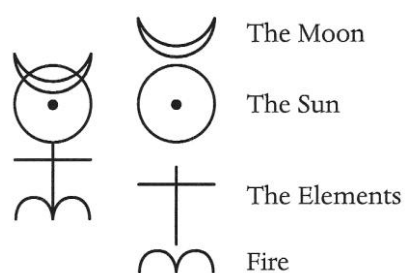
“In his work *Hieroglyphic Monad*, Dee believed he had found a hieroglyph – a hitherto hidden symbol – which contained in its form the unifying principle of reality. It is a kind of microchip which contains within it all the most elementary principles of the universe. It is to be contemplated upon and fixed in memory as an archetype applicable to all studies. But what is it? If one can imagine a great ocean of *Prima Materia* (“First Matter”), which we may call in this context Spirit – a pure unformed, undirected, unmoving, unmoved homogenous world – then we see the very beginning of the universe. If a hand were to, as it were, drop his Hieroglyphic Monad into that ocean of potentials, the *Prima Materia* would immediately start forming itself into the universe we imagine we know.”

While Dee believed his Monad carried the seed of transformation for everything in the universe, he never spoke of its meaning in his public lectures because he felt the Monad was much too powerful to share with the uninitiated. He privately told other alchemists that his symbol not only described the precise interrelationship of the fundamental archetypal energies, but it also showed the way to transmutation of the metals, as well as the spiritual transformation of humanity.

Dee’s “Sacred Symbol of Oneness” was considered so powerful in Elizabethan times that the frontispiece of his book became known around the world as the “Greater Seal of London.” It was usually shown with the Latin caption *In Hoc Signo Vincas* (“In this sign, you will conquer.”).

Dee had written a private, unpublished book that explained in detail the workings of the Monad. In the inventory of his massive library was a description of that book, which he intended only for his fellow alchemists. But his secret guidebook was destroyed when a mob of religious zealots broke into his home and burned his precious library.

Dee commented: “He who devotes himself sincerely to these mysteries will see clearly that nothing is able to exist without the virtue of our Hieroglyphic Monad. Whoever does not understand should either learn or be silent.”



There are four sections to Dee’s Monad (see diagram at left). At the top, the Moon crescent is shown conjuncted with the Sun. The Sun is the symbol for the Monad, which also represents the incorruptible metal gold. Next is the Cross of the Elements that connects the Above and the Below of the cipher. At its base is the sign for Aries, which is symbolic of the Secret Fire of transformation – meditative consciousness.

By tracing the connecting lines and arcs in the cipher in different ways, one can locate all the archetypal symbols of the planets and thereby reveal the invisible forces behind Nature. . The planetary metals are also indicated since the ciphers for each planet and its metal are the same. All the glyphs of the five visible planets along with the ciphers for the Monad (the Sun) and crescent Moon are used.



The merged planetary ciphers are arranged left to right and top to bottom around the Cross of the Elements. On the vertical axis, the congruent ciphers for Venus-copper (above left) and Mars-iron (above right) are shown in conjunction (or on top of each other) in Dee's cipher.



On the horizontal axis, the ciphers for Saturn and Jupiter are shown in their reflected duality. The cipher for Saturn-lead (above left) is oriented correctly with the standard cipher on the left and its reflected cipher on the right. However, the ciphers for Jupiter-tin (above right) have been twisted 90°, so that you must turn your head to see them. Unless you look at them from the right angle, the ciphers for Jupiter and Saturn look similar.

According to Dee, by placing the planetary ciphers in their proper relationship, the alchemical symbols are imbued with an "immortal life," allowing their coded meaning to be expressed "most eloquently in any tongue and to any nation." In this arrangement, the monadic Sun (circle with a dot) is the only symbol that is always the same. No matter which way the Hieroglyphic Monad is turned – upside down, left to right, right to left, or its mirror image – the cipher for the Monad itself is eternally the same.

The heart of the Hieroglyphic Monad and the one cipher that encompasses all the others is the cipher for Mercury. Mercury stands for the principle of light and consciousness, which is the source of all transformation in the universe.

Just as depicted in Dee's Monad, Mercury is part of all the metals and elements of alchemy and melds them together as one. Dee embedded the spirit of Mercury at the heart of his master symbol and believed he had successfully captured the essence of all the metallic archetypes. The cipher for Mercury is shown to the right of Dee's Monad in the drawing below:



Dee felt his Hieroglyphic Monad was the true Philosopher's Stone because it provided perfect knowledge of everything. For him, the fabled Stone was always a higher state of consciousness and not a physical object.

Dee's magical glyph is said to incorporate some of the powers of the Philosopher's Stone whenever it is drawn. In other words, the Hieroglyphic Monad is believed to carry its own spirit or intelligence, which is evoked every time it is written down or constructed.

A Geometric Meditation on the Monad

The following geometric construction requires only a square and compass – the traditional tools of sacred geometry used in Freemasonry. With these simple tools, you can make a point, line, right angle, circle, and semi-circles. That's all it takes to build a universe.

- 1) At the center of a piece of paper, make a single dot. This is the Monad, the dimensionless One Point that modern science views as the inexplicable Singularity of the Big Bang.
- 2) Using the Monad point as center, draw a circle with a 1-inch (2.5 cm) radius. The circle delineates the manifested universe. Now look at what you have drawn: it is the cipher for both the Monad and the Sun, and what is about to unfold is the "Operation of the Sun" mentioned in Hermetic writings.
- 3) Now draw a semicircle of the same 1-inch radius intersecting the top of the cipher for the Sun. This crescent represents the Moon facing the Sun and reflecting its light. This union of Fire (Sun) and Water (Moon) is the Sacred Marriage of the King and Queen in alchemy. The overall figure you have created also represents the Horns of Taurus (the Egyptian bull-god of fertility), which at this level represents the hidden Spiritual Fire in the life force.
- 4) At the very bottom of the circle, draw a vertical line downward for 3-inches (7.5 cm). This is the vertical axis of reality or *Axis Mundi* that connects the spiritual or energetic realm Above with the material or manifested world Below.
- 5) At 1-inch (2.5 cm) down on the vertical axis, draw a horizontal line 2-inches (5 cm) wide centered at right angles to the vertical line. This is the horizontal axis of reality, which symbolizes the fundamental duality of creation. It represents the polarities of King-Queen, light-darkness, positive-negative, right-left, conservative-liberal, male-female, etc., that make the world go 'round.
- 6) The cross we constructed provides deep insight into reality. Known as the Cross of the Elements, it is where the soul is crucified, torn between opposing vertical and horizontal forces. Dee calls the point where the lines meet the "Copulative Center," meaning a fertile inner point of balance and repose. It represents human consciousness, just as the center point above in the Sun represents the One Mind in the universe.
- 7) The two lines and their crossing point make up a *Tria Prima* of forces representing Body or Salt (the horizontal line), Soul or Sulfur (the vertical line), and Spirit or Mercury (their crossing point). The *Tria Prima* plus the Four Elements constitute the Septenary or sevenfold pattern of creation.

- 8) A Quaternary or Cubic Space is created by the four intersecting lines, which stand for the Four Elements. The Quintessence or Fifth Element is indicated by their shared crossing point that represents mind or consciousness. The overall construction we have just completed is the cipher for Mercury.
- 9) At this point, Dee gets rather mystical about the deeper relationship of vertical and horizontal realities. He intuitively discerns a hidden Octad ("eightness") which is concealed in the geometric relationship between the four lines and the four right angles. He advises the reader to study this relationship "with great attention." Dee's hidden Octad seems to refer to an unseen reality, a higher octave of creation beyond the four-square world in which we live.
- 10) At the bottom of the vertical line, draw two 1-inch (2.5 cm) radius semicircles—one touching the bottom of the line on the left side and the other on the right side. The two semicircles form the astrological sign of Aries Ram, which is associated with the Fire Element and the burst of life in the Spring. "To begin the work of this Monad," notes Dee, "the aid of Fire is required." The single point at the bottom where the two semicircles meet once again form the horns of Taurus, but at this level it represents another kind of Fire—the instinctive male-female physical sexuality that is part of the Mind of Nature.

Our sacred construction of the Hieroglyphic Monad is now complete. Take a few minutes to reflect on your drawing and what the individual symbols mean in relation to one another. Overall, what is the purpose of the archetypal progression from the top (the Above) of the figure to the bottom (the Below)? What is being created? Can you see in the cipher a stick-figure of the archetypal human being?

Gerhardt Dorn

Gerhardt Dorn (1530-1584) promoted the idea of the *Unus Mundus* (Latin for "One World"), which is an underlying monadic reality from which everything emerges and to which everything returns. "Don't you know that heaven and the elements were formerly one," Dorn queried his readers, "and were separated by a divine act of creation from one another, that they might bring forth you and all things."

Dorn was one of the greatest spiritual alchemists of his time, and he was obviously familiar with the notion of *spiritus*. "In the human body," he wrote, "is hidden a certain substance of a heavenly nature known to very few people. It needs no medicine because it is itself the incorruptible medicine. The ancient philosophers, through some divine inspiration, recognized the strength and heavenly virtue of this substance and how to free it from its fetters, but by a similar medicine in itself."

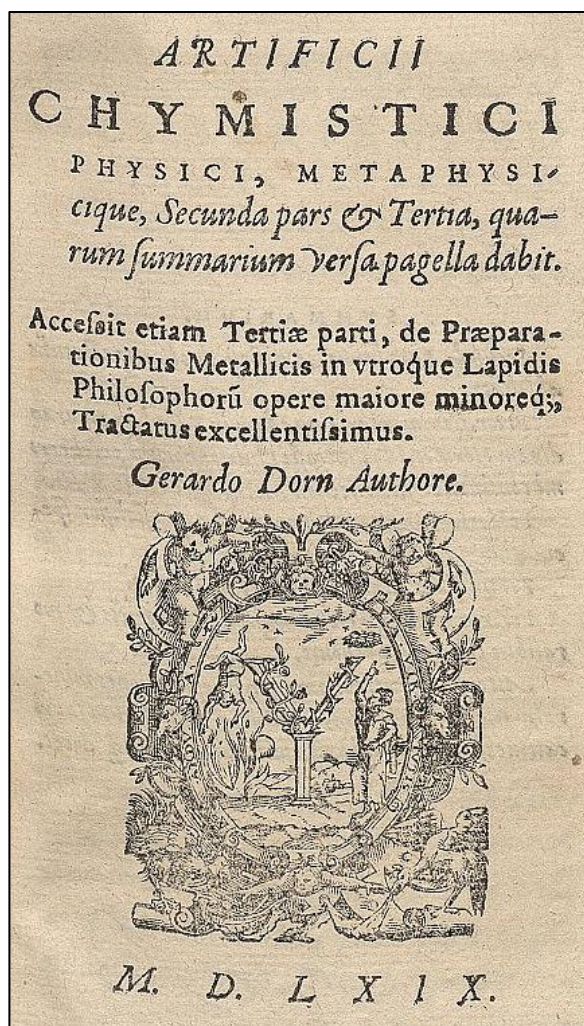


Figure 30. Frontispiece to Dorn's *Chymistici Physici Metaphysique*.

In his treatise *Philosophia Speculative* ("The Speculative Philosophy"), Dorn wrote:

"This castle of inner truth will destroy many people; it is a cheap thing, mostly despised and even hated. But one should not hate it but rather love it; it is the greatest treasure; it is loving to everybody and hostile to everybody. You can find it everywhere and practically nobody has ever found it.

"Change yourself, the heavenly wisdom says, from dead philosophical stones into living philosophical stones, because I am the true medicine and I change everything which cannot exist into something eternal. Why are you possessed by madness? Through yourself but not from you, is everything which you need and which you wrongly seek outside.⁴⁷

"There shines in us, though dimly in darkness, the life and the light of man, a light which does not come from us, which however is in us, and we must therefore find it within us. It belongs to Him who has put it into us; we can find it in Him, in His light. Therefore the truth is not to be looked for in us, but in the image of God which dwells within us, that is the one thing which has no second other thing. It is the Being and is in itself the whole of existence."

In his writings, Dorn advocated a spiritual "Philosophy of Love" and defined the Great Work of alchemy as an effort that redeemed not man but God, since sentient beings added value and meaning to the universe. In her work *Pregnant Darkness: Alchemy and the Rebirth of Consciousness* (2004), Monika Wikman noted: "Alchemists, such as Gerhard Dorn in his work *The Speculative Philosophy*, referred to the next alchemical stage as the *Unus Mundus* (or "The One World"), where splits are healed, duality ceases, and the individual, the *vir unus* (Latin for "the One Man" or "Integrated Man"), unites with the World Soul."⁴⁸

Dorn claimed that alchemy was not about laboratory work but was an ancient way of thinking that should be applied to a theoretical study of the human mind. Like many alchemists, Dorn condemned the materialistic philosophy of Aristotle. "Whoever wishes to learn the alchemical art," he wrote, "let him not learn the philosophy of Aristotle but that which teaches the truth."

⁴⁷ In "Individual Dream Symbolism in Relation to Alchemy" Carl Jung quotes Dorn: *Transmutemini in vivos lapides philosophicos!* ("Transform yourselves into living philosophical stones!"). *Psychology and Alchemy*, Collected Works, vol. 12 par. 187.

⁴⁸ Wikman, Monika. *Pregnant Darkness*. Berwick, Maine: Nicolas-Hays, Inc., 2004. Page 59 in trade paperback edition. Dorn's principal writings are included in Volume I of the *Theatrum Chemicum*.

Heinrich Khunrath



Figure 31. Painted engraving of Heinrich Khunrath.

Heinrich Khunrath (1560-1605) was a German alchemist whose studies of John Dee and Paracelsus led him to develop a spiritual system of natural magic. Yet as a natural philosopher, Khunrath also believed that observation and experimentation were necessary for alchemical research.

Born in 1560 in Dresden, Germany, Khunrath became a noted physician, alchemist, and mystical philosopher whose works had a lasting impact on the development of alchemy, esoteric philosophy, and Rosicrucian thought.

Khunrath's most popular book was *Amphitheatrum Sapientiae Aeternae* (or "The Amphitheater of Eternal Wisdom"). In it, he explained the many phases of personal transformation and spiritual perfection in alchemy. The beautifully illustrated work

delved into the spiritual and symbolic aspects of alchemy, emphasizing the pursuit of divine wisdom through the transformation of base materials into a higher, spiritual states.

The book contains a famous engraving of an alchemist's laboratory called "The First Stage of the Great Work," better known simply as "The Alchemist's Laboratory," which is shown on page 67. The first edition of the book was published in Hamburg in 1595. It contained four elaborate, circular hand-colored, engraved plates highlighted with gold and silver. The plates were designed by Khunrath and engraved by Paullus van der Doort. Another version was published after Khunrath's death in an expanded edition with other plates in Hanau in 1609.

The layout of the "The Alchemist's Laboratory" painting is in the form of a monadic circle, whose center point is the doorway just beyond a dual-columned archway – symbolically beyond Duality. Above the arch is the Latin inscription *Dormiens vigila* ("While sleeping, be vigilant"). In other words, when relaxed with the egoic mind asleep, keep your awareness. This describes the true state of alchemical meditation.

The painting is divided into three areas of the Work. To the left is an oratory (a prayer and meditation tabernacle), which represents the personal, inner laboratory of the alchemist where the psychospiritual work proceeds. There is a hanging placard directly above the kneeling alchemist that says: *Ne loquaris de Deo absque lumine* (“Do not speak of God outside the Light”). This is an important admonition, because trying to define or limit the mystery of the ineffable presence of God outside the divine Light is an impossible task. Anyone who tries to do it is a fraud.

But if the alchemist is in the Light – that is, possesses an enlightened mind – then they can share the divine mind. This idea is expressed in the Latin phrase on the side of the tabernacle, which says: “God himself has said this to you nobly.”

The legs of the table under the tabernacle say *Disce bene mori* (“Learn to die well.”). This is the meditative process of nirvanic extinction we discussed earlier.

To the right is a laboratory workbench in the style of an “open tabernacle” surrounded by shelves of chemicals and powders, which include a vial of mercury metal and a bottle labeled “Azoth” (sophic or philosophic mercury). Above the shelves is the ribboned motto *Nec temere, nec timide* (“Neither rashly, nor timidly”). The two columns supporting the shelves are labeled *Ratio* (“Reason”) and *Experientia* (“Experience”).

On the ceiling above, there is suspended a seven-pointed star candelabra with burning candles that illuminate the whole laboratory. They represent the seven basic operations of alchemy. Directly below the candelabra, there is a red chair situated between the spiritual work in the tabernacle on the left and the practical work in the laboratory on the right. This is where the alchemist evaluates their progress, trying to balance the spiritual and experimental insights gained.

In the foreground, there is a project table with various tools and musical instruments. The tablecloth has some random Latin words about the sanctity of musical things, inspiration, how to “fly with joy,” and how to venerate something by pouring a fluid over it.

So, the three realms in which the Great Work takes place are:

- 1) **Psychospiritual.** The personal psychological and spiritual work of the alchemist proceeds in the privacy of the tabernacle or inner laboratory.
- 2) **Practical.** The laboratory where physical experiments take place and new substances are produced from various organic and inorganic materials.
- 3) **Transcendent.** The realm of pure divine Light connected to the imagination of the alchemist that provides enlightenment and perfection.

Overall, this beautiful painting shows how the Great Work of material and spiritual transformation proceeds simultaneously in both the outer and inner laboratories of the alchemist. Alchemy was always meant to be practiced with a blend of spiritual and practical methods. You can see an original copy of the complete work at <https://www.alchemy-texts.com/book/the-amphitheater-of-eternal-wisdom/>.



Figure 32. *Amphitheatrum Sapientiae Aeternae* or “The Amphitheater of Eternal Wisdom” (1595).

Michael Maier



Figure 33. Spiritual alchemist Michael Maier.

Michael Maier (1568–1622) was a German physician, alchemist, and counsellor to Holy Roman Emperor and patron of alchemy Rudolf II of Habsburg (1552–1612). Maier was an accomplished alchemist who followed a strictly spiritual interpretation of the Art. Around 1599, he wrote an insightful alchemical concordance by synergizing the works of several diverse alchemists.⁴⁹

Maier was also the author of many other influential texts on spiritual alchemy, including *Atalanta Fugiens* (“Atalanta Fleeing,” 1617) which is a collection of 50 alchemical emblems, each with a discourse and musical score for a short fugue. In Greek mythology, Atalanta is a virgin huntress who would only marry someone who outran and caught her in the forest.

Maier wrote two texts supporting Rosicrucian alchemy, which was partially based on the spiritual methods of Paracelsus. But Maier was threatened with prosecution by the Lutheran Church in Germany, which forbid contact with the “supernatural realms” outside its established sacraments.⁵⁰

Jakob Boehme

Jakob Boehme (1575–1624) was a German spiritual alchemist who is also known as “Jacob Böhme” and “Jacob Behmen” (in 17th century England). The son of peasant farmers, he had only a rudimentary education and became a shoemaker by trade.

But Boehme was an avid reader. Influenced by the alchemical writings of Paracelsus and the Hermeticists of the period, Boehme based his form of spiritual alchemy on “living symbolic images” and archetypal energies he received during trancelike states of meditation.

⁴⁹ Figala, Karin; Neumann, Ulrich (1990). “Michael Maier (1569–1622): New Bio-Bibliographical Material”. In Martels, Z.R.W.M. von (ed.). *Alchemy revisited: Proceedings of the International conference on the History of Alchemy at the University of Groningen*, 17–19 April 1989 (1st ed.). Leiden: E.J. Brill. pp. 34–50. ISBN 9004092870.

⁵⁰ *Silentium post Clamores* (1617) and *Themis Aurea* (1618) by Michael Maier.



Figure 34. Painting of Jakob Boehme.

So overcome was he by the experience that he rushed out into a nearby park to see if what he felt was real. There, he “gazed into the very heart of things” – the “Thing Itself” of the grass and trees – and that hidden foundation of things harmonized with what he inwardly saw. But the humble shoemaker kept the experience to himself.

Then in 1610, at the age of 35, Boehme had another profound experience with the mysterious light. Now he beheld the universe as a coherent whole, whereas previously he had seen only chaotic fragments. In his personal journal, Boehme elaborated on what had taken place:

“The gate was opened to me that in one quarter of an hour, I saw and knew more than if I had been many years at a university. For I saw and knew the Being of all beings, the Byss and Abyss, the eternal generation of the Trinity, the descent and origin of

the world and of all creatures through the divine wisdom. I knew and saw in myself all the three worlds, namely, (1) the Divine (spiritual or paradisaical), (2) the Dark (the original fuel of nature in the fire) and (3) the External or visible world (being a procreation or external birth from both the internal and spiritual worlds). And I saw and knew the whole working essence – in the evil and the good – and the original and the existence of each of them. Likewise, I saw how the fruitful-bearing-womb of eternity brought them forth. So that I did not only greatly wonder at my experience but did also exceedingly rejoice.”

In 1612, Boehme began keeping a journal of his experiences he called *Die Morgenroete im Aufgang* (or “The Morning Redness in the Rising of the Sun”), but a copy fell into the hands of the Lutheran pastor of Gorlitz, who considered the work heresy and threatened to exile Boehme if he continued writing. In *Aurora*, Böhme revealed seven planetary archetypes at the basis of reality. They are the same archetypes of the alchemists:

- 1) **Saturn** - Dry - melancholy, power of death.
- 2) **Jupiter** - Sweet - sanguine, gentle source of life.
- 3) **Mars** - Bitter - choleric, destructive source of life.
- 4) **Sun** - Fire; **Moon** - Water. *Duality* of Sun/Moon; cholic/phlegmatic; day/night; good/evil; consciousness/the subconscious.
- 5) **Venus** - Love - love of life, spiritual rebirth.
- 6) **Mercury** - Sound - keen spirit, illumination, mind, expression.
- 7) **Earth** - Corpus (Body) - totality of forces awaiting rebirth.

Finally, six years later in 1618, at the insistence of people who had read *Aurora*, Boehme began writing again and eventually produced over two dozen treatises, all of which were secretly copied by hand and circulated among his followers.

In his book *De Tribus Principiis* (or “On the Three Principles of Divine Being”), Böhme subsumed the seven archetypes listed above into a Trinity of forces: First, the “dark world” of the Father (combining archetypes 1-2-3); Second, the “light world” of the Holy Spirit (combining archetypes 5-6-7); and third, “This dualistic world” of Satan and Christ (archetype 4).

In his writings, Boehme proclaimed that all things arise from a formless void he called the *Ungrund* (literally, “the place without ground”). According to Boehme, this infinite Abyss is brought to manifestation by the primordial urge of the divine Mind to become conscious of itself.

In his writings, Boehme left instructions for others to experience what he called the “Supersensual Life.” He said anyone can experience the hidden level of creation by purifying their consciousness to a supersensual monadic state “before nature and creature.” After “extricating our consciousness from all that is the effect of our time and place,” what remains is a state beyond duality of absolute simplicity and clarity. Although Boehme spoke in religious terms, his experiences were deeply mystical states far outside conventional church dogma. Following are the five basic steps Boehme taught his followers for connecting to the divine Mind, the ineffable Will of God:

- 1) **Interior Silence.** For Boehme, “the insatiable self” (or ego) possesses “only an anxious and dry hunger” to frantically see itself in the mirror of its own being. That part of us must be silenced to proceed. “If you could be silent from all willing and thinking for just one hour,” Boehme told his followers, “you would hear God's inexpressible words. If you can sweep up for a moment into that in which no creature dwells, you can hear what God speaks. When you remain silent from the thinking and willing of self, the eternal hearing, seeing, and speaking will be revealed in you. But your own hearing, willing, and seeing hinders you so that you do not see and hear God.”⁵¹
- 2) **Centering.** This tool is designed to help you move from a deep Interior space into the monadic Mind. Boehme called it “being in the will of God.” Centering is actually a process of letting go of yourself (your old egoic center), so you are free to find a new center within the divine Mind. In Boehme’s words, you need to “calm your will” and give yourself the radical consent to “rest in God.” To work with Boehme’s Method, you need to deconcentrate your mind; *never* use the focused attention tools of other meditative techniques like repeating a mantra or focusing on breathing. Just surrender

⁵¹ Achieving interior silence is the first step in many different traditions, and you can practice it by reviewing the process of Disengagement described in the Basic Alchemical Meditation beginning on page 82.

yourself for a while, and you will find your natural center in the One Mind. Once you are centered, you no longer have to work on suppressing thoughts; your old thoughts will simply disappear as they arise. A sense of confident equanimity will take their place.

- 3) **True Resignation.** The German word Boehme uses for this stage is *Gelassenheit*, which means “total calmness, feeling at home, comfortable.” There is no “trying” at this level. After letting go of the material world and yourself in it, all you have to do is relax completely into this new spiritual realm. According to Boehme, “True Resignation does not kill you but makes you alive, according to the life of your true nature. Then you live, yet not you, but your will becomes its Will – a complete indwelling, so that the eternal seeing, hearing, and speaking are yours.”
- 4) **True Being.** According to Boehme, only when one is completely “resigned” and out of the way is it possible to reflect the divine light into the world. “True Being,” in Boehms’ words, “is the resigned soul brought to the ground. Where the soul dies to its own will and wills nothing more than what God wills, there it dwells. For insofar as the self-will is dead to itself, it takes for itself the place where earlier the self-will sat. There is now nothing, and where nothing is, God's love works alone.” To be in the divine Will of God, having resigned your own will, is an immediate and direct opening – energetically and physically – to the Source of all being, which to Boehme is pure Love.
- 5) **Indwelling Love.** The final stage is bringing the vibrant higher Presence, which has been mysteriously infused in one’s soul, back into the chaotic world, which Boehm views as “a useless carving in the great laboriousness of man – the contending wheel of Nature where good and evil constantly contend with one another. What good builds up,” he wrote, “evil breaks down.” Only action within the divine Will, carried in the indwelling power of Love can manifest the Source and true center in the world. “If you find it,” Boehme said, “you will come into the Ground out of which all things proceed and in which they stand, and you will be in it a king over all the works of God.” For Boehme, this kind of Love, which is the Will of God, is an energy-charged field in which we must abide, refraining from any action not part of it.

But he warned anyone who would approach his writings with the wrong attitude: “My writings are only for those willing to receive the truth in a simple and childlike state of mind. I have written only for those who seek truth; to the cunning and world-wise, I have nothing to say.”

Robert Fludd



Figure 35. Engraving of Robert Fludd.

Fludd expounded a tripartite philosophy of matter in which all things originated from darkness and Chaos through the action of divine Light that created the “waters” of Spirit in matter. Fludd’s Chaos-Light-Spirit model appealed to alchemists who were looking for the higher principles behind Paracelus’ Sufur-Mercury-Salt theory.

For Fludd, Light was the “active agent” behind creation, and he built his model of the macrocosmic universe based on that idea. He placed the Sun, as the source of light and Spirit, at the center of the universe.⁵²

Fludd extrapolated his theory of the Sun’s role in the macrocosmic universe to the heart’s role in the microcosmic human body. As the Sun was to Earth, so was the heart to a person; and just as the rays of the Sun convey life-giving Spirit to Earth, so does

Robert Fludd (1574-1637) was an English Paracelsian physician, spiritual alchemist, Rosicrucian, and Hermeticist. Fludd graduated from Oxford University in 1597, and for six years after his graduation, he studied Hermeticism, alchemy, and medicine on the European continent.

Fludd believed that numbers, ratios, and sacred geometry were the key to spiritual understanding, and he concluded that the number “three” was the *principium formarum* (or “principle of formation”) behind creation. The number three provided an important cosmological principle for understanding alchemy, spirituality, Christianity, the Kabbalah, and mystical traditions.

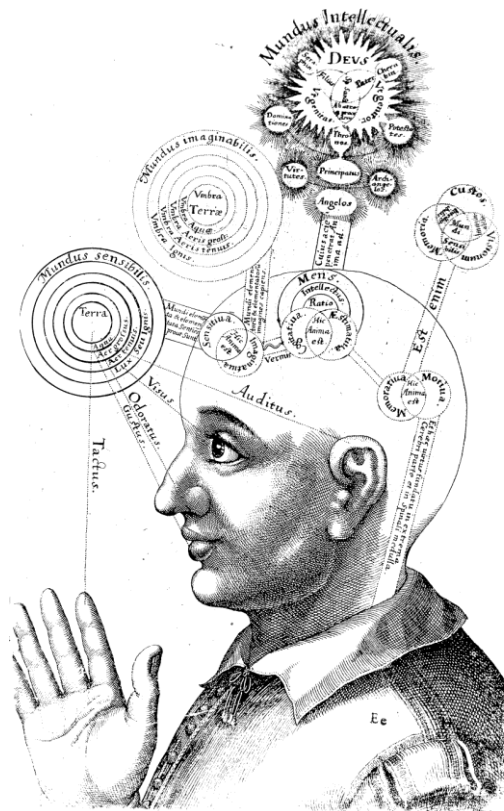


Figure 36. Diagram of the “Spiritual Brain” from Fludd’s *Utriusque Cosmi*.

⁵² Fludd believed that Spirit was literally located within the Sun based on the so-called Alchemical Psalm 19:4 (“In them hath he set a tabernacle for the sun,” etc.). Huffman, William H. Huffman. *Robert Fludd*. North Atlantic Books, 2001. p.146. ISBN 978-1-55643-373-3.

the blood circulate life-giving Spirit in the body.⁵³

Fludd wrote many books in which he illustrated his ideas with informative but intricate diagrams. One of his most influential books was *Utriusque Cosmi* (or “History of the Two Worlds”). Published in two volumes between 1617 and 1621, the encyclopedic work was about the two realms of the spiritual universe and the manifested world on Earth.

Jean Baptist van Helmont



Figure 37. Portrait of Jean Baptist van Helmont.

Jean Baptist van Helmont (1580-1644) was an alchemist from Brussels who believed that the Paracelsian concept of the “Archeus” is an archetypal spiritual principle that controls life and all phenomena in the body. In the alchemy of Paracelsus, the term “Archeus” refers to the lowest or densest feature of the astral plane that controls the growth and continuation of all living things. The Archeus can be visualized as the layer between worlds of spirit Above and matter Below, where matter begins to transmute back into spiritual energies.⁵⁴

Van Helmont described the Archeus as the *aura vitalis seminum vitae directrix* (or “the vital breath of the seeds is the guide of life”). That is, in Van Helmont’s own words: “The chief Workman that consists of the conjoining of the vital air, as of the matter, with the seminal likeness, which is the more inward spiritual kernel, containing the fruitfulness of the Seed; but the visible Seed is only the husk of this.”⁵⁵

⁵³ Allen G. Debus, *Robert Fludd and the Circulation of the Blood*, *J Hist Med Allied Sci* (1961) XVI (4): 374-393. doi: 10.1093/jhmas/XVI.4.374.

⁵⁴ Chisholm, Hugh, ed. (1911). “*Helmont, Jean Baptiste van*”. *Encyclopedia Britannica*. Vol. 13 (11th ed.). Cambridge University Press. pp. 249–250.

⁵⁵ Van Helmont, John Baptista (1662). *Oriatrike or Physick Refined*, and English translation of *Ortus Medicinae*. Translated by John Chandler.

Van Helmont had frequent visions that guided his life, and he described imagination as a celestial, and possibly magical, force in the world. Though skeptical of many mystical theories, he refused to abandon his belief that magical forces were behind natural phenomena. Van Helmont's 1621 paper on "sympathetic principles" caused him to be placed under house arrest, although his trial in 1634 never ended in a verdict.⁵⁶

Pierre-Jean Fabre



Figure 38. Cameo of Pierre-Jean Fabre.

Pierre-Jean Fabre (1588-1658) was a French doctor and alchemist who practiced the iatrochemical medicine of Paracelsus. In his book *Alchymista Christianus* (or "Christian Alchemy") he commented on the psycho-spiritual operations of alchemy and their spiritual correspondences in the Christian faith. For instance, calcination represented penitence, while the elements Fire and Water symbolized baptism. The Philosopher's Stone was the holy Eucharist. In this view, alchemists were priests in the Great Work, the spirit of Mercury was the archetypal intelligence of the angels, and Salt was the incarnation of Christ. Plus, according to Fabre, all these correspondences in spiritual alchemy were open secrets on display in the construction of the great cathedrals of Europe.⁵⁷

Matthieu Merian



Figure 39. Engraving of Matthieu Merian.

The projection of the *logos* from the divine Mind (or Monad) is graphically presented in an engraving by artist Matthieu Merian (1593-1650), which was first published in 1618 in Daniel Mylius's *Opus Medico-Chymicum* (or "The Medical-Chemical Work"). This complicated engraving is shown on the next page.

Known as the *Tabula Smaragdina* (or "Emerald Tablet"), it refers to the ancient Egyptian artifact attributed to Hermes Trismegistus that describes the monadic cosmology of the "One Mind" and "One Thing" (or the mind and matter in the universe that we are familiar with). But in Hermetic philosophy, these two aspects of reality are really just one substance (*spiritus*) – or in the dictum of Hermeticists, "All Is One."

⁵⁶ Clericuzio, Antonio (1993). "British Journal for the History of Science". Proceedings of the Royal Society of Medicine. 26 (3): 23–28; Redgrove, H. Stanley (1922). *Joannes Baptista van Helmont; alchemist, physician and philosopher*. London: William Rider & Son. pp. 46.

⁵⁷ A.G. Debus, *The Chemical Challenge to Medical and Scientific Tradition in Early Modern France*, p75.

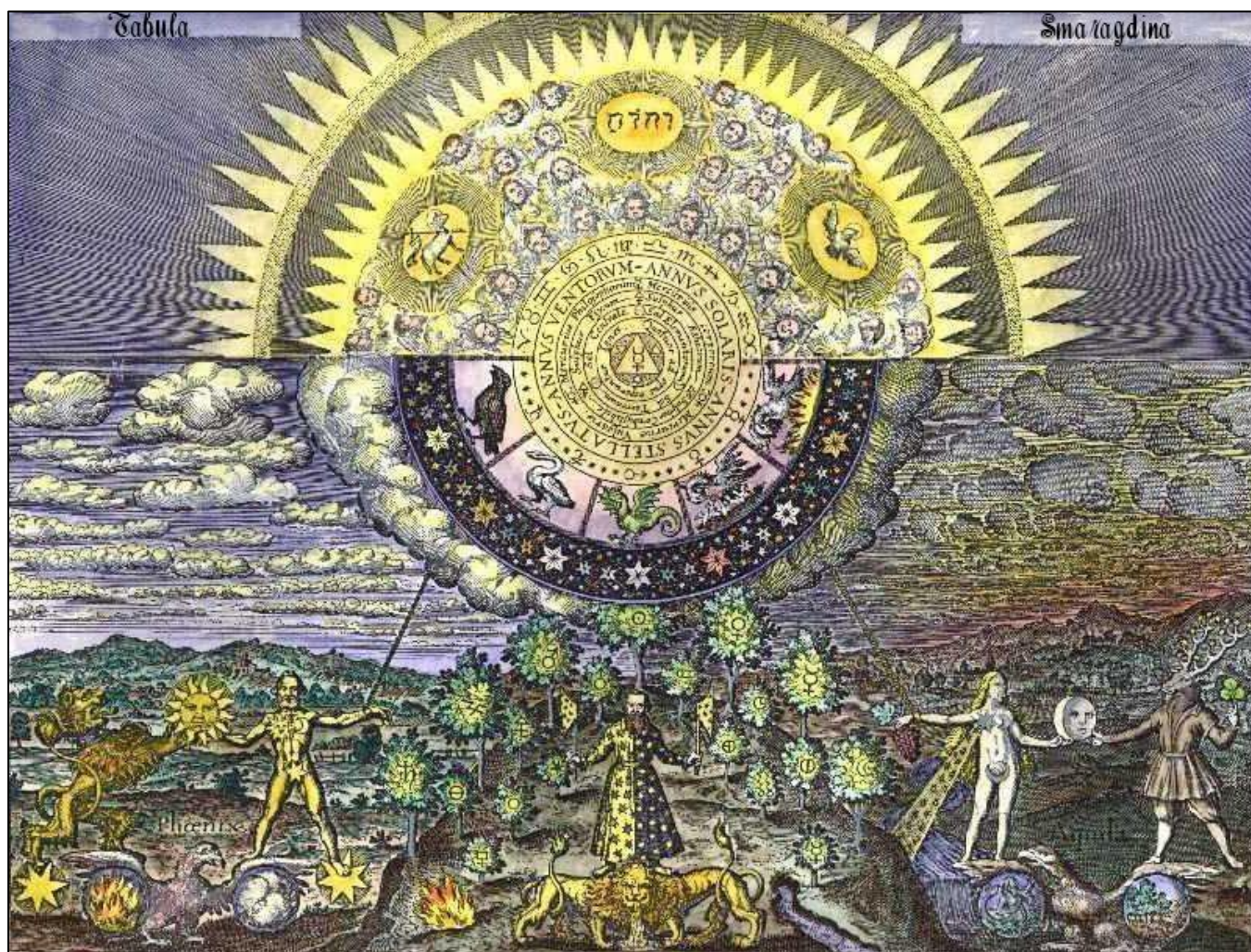


Figure 40. *Tabula Smaragdina - Teachings of the Emerald Tablet.*

The first thing you notice about this engraving is its sharp division into the Above and the Below sections. The Above is the spiritual realm of light and divine archetypes (symbolized by cherubs), while the Below is the manifested realm of matter and duality.

We see two great suns rising over the horizon Above. The larger sun in the background is the ineffable Monad or One Mind, whose rays encompass the whole universe. In front of this is a smaller sun known as “Mind the “Maker.” This we can think of as the mind of Nature or the physical laws of the created world.

“Mind the Maker” is a concept that could have gotten you burnt at the stake if you had spoken of it in the Middle Ages. It implies that God does not directly participate in our world. Instead, the thoughts of God (or *logos*) were projected into our reality like a template or matrix — what the *Emerald Tablet* calls the “Pattern.”

In the drawing, these crystallized thoughts of God are symbolized by the Holy Trinity of divine forces (Father, Son, Holy Ghost) and the archetypal angels embedded in the smaller sun. We see the manifested duality of our existence in the horizontal division of the Below into left and right sections. On the left is the daytime realm of Solar energy and masculine

symbols. On the right is the nighttime realm of Lunar energy and feminine symbols. But at the center Below is the hermaphroditic Hermes, who wields two starry axes. Hermes has cut the chains that bind us to the world Below by merging opposites. He now understands the full power of the archetypal forces that are a gateway back to the spiritual reality Above.

At the heart of the engraving is a *mandala*-like “bull’s-eye” target depicting the divine thoughts (*logos*). This is the plethoric abundance that is the origin of all created things being projected into our reality. The seven Hermetic layers of this sphere must be peeled away like an onion to reveal the secret at its core, which is marked with the cipher for Mercury, the archetypal agent of consciousness and evolution in the universe.

Focus your attention on the center-point target of the engraving. The Mercury cipher lies within the triangle enclosed by the dark circle in the central *mandala*. The circle is the heart of the Monad with the triangle representing the Three Essentials—Sulfur (Energy), Salt (Matter), and Mercury (Light).

Imagine the cosmic One Mind is projecting its archetypal content directly into your mind. It is being pushed out toward you on a third axis beyond the flat vertical and horizontal dimensions of the engraving.

This is the mercurial path emerging from *beyond duality* that returns you to Oneness. It is the pure light directed right at the viewer. That is where to focus, as you try to incorporate all the ciphers and symbols of this complicated drawing into a single vision. Use your intuition in working with this engraving.⁵⁸

Muhzin Fayz Kashani



Figure 41. Painting of Muhzin Fayz Kashani

Muhzin Fayz Kashani (1598-1680) was a Persian genius who wrote 122 books on philosophy, religion, alchemy, and science. He believed that the power of the spiritual world alone is not capable of making a connection between the spiritual and the material realms. But there is an intermediary realm of archetypal light in which interaction between the spiritual and material is possible. This luminal world is a spiritual realm that also manifests in space and time and therefore can be perceived by humans.

Yet this luminal world consists of pure light that transcends space and time. So, the archetypal light is not entirely spiritual nor entirely material—it manifests in the world yet transcends it.

⁵⁸ If you need help, there is a detailed analysis of the *Tabula Smaragdina* engraving at <https://MonadManifesto.com/articles-research>.

Kashini concludes that the archetypal light is a spiritual “substance” similar to our idea of *spiritus*.

Like Maria Prophetissa expressed 1,300 years earlier, Kashani’s process is one in which “spirits are corporealized and bodies spiritualized” in the intermediary world of light. That is, because material and spiritual properties are all connected by the archetypal light, the material substance is reflected in the spiritual substance. That process allows the soul to transfer from its bodily form to its spiritual form upon death.⁵⁹

According to Kahini, since darkness is the absence of light, all knowledge of existence depends on a person’s ability to perceive all degrees of light. The divine Mind is the brightest Light and represents the highest level of Being that subsists in itself. Humans experience “being” too, but we possess a lesser degree of this reflected light and the limited spiritual knowledge that comes with it.

Anne Conway

Anne Conway (1631–1679) was a practicing alchemist who advocated a greater application of the art of Fermentation. Unfortunately, from the age of 12, Anne suffered from debilitating migraines, and as an adult, she was often incapacitated by pain. Although Anne was treated



Figure 42. Cameo of Anne Conway.

by the best physicians of the time, including William Harvey, Thomas Willis, and famed alchemist Robert Boyle, nothing worked. Despite her desire to meet with the great minds of Europe, the extreme pain forced her to pursue her studies at home

Anne has been called “England’s greatest female philosopher” based on her single work *The Principles of the Most Ancient and Modern Philosophy* (1677). Two years after finishing the book, she died at the age of 47. While writing the book, Anne had corresponded with the Flemish alchemist Franciscus Mercurius van Helmont (1614-1698), and in 1690, he published her book posthumously in Latin.

In the book, Anne developed the idea of the Monad as the one spiritual substance or *spiritus* from which the world was created. She was highly critical of dualist theories of soul and body and also attacked the strictly materialistic view of atomism. Instead, she proposed a radical new view of reality, which has been described as the “vitalist-monist” assertion that everything in the universe originated from a living unitary consciousness.

⁵⁹ Hamid Dabashi and Seyyed Nasr. “Mulla Muhsin Fayd Kashani.” *Shi’ism: Doctrines, Thoughts, and Spirituality*. Ed. Seyyed Nasr. Albany: State University of New York, 1988. 307-08. Print.

The famous German genius, Gottfried Leibniz, openly admitted his debt to Anne in developing his famous system of Monadology. “My philosophical views approach somewhat closely those of the late Countess of Conway,” Leibniz said, “that everything takes place according to a living principle and according to final causes – all things are full of life and consciousness, contrary to the views of the Atomists.”

Thomas Vaughan



Figure 43. Painting of Thomas Vaughan.

Thomas Vaughan (1621-1666) was a Welsh spiritual alchemist who wrote in English under the pseudonym of “Eugenius Philalethes.” Vaughan was very religious, and he defended his faith against those who could not understand his work in alchemy and magic:

“Magic is nothing else but the wisdom the the Creator revealed and planted in the creature. Magicians were the first attendants our Savior met withal in this world, and the only philosophers who acknowledged him in the flesh before that he himself discovered it. I find God conversant with them, as he was formerly with the patriarchs; he directs them in their travels with a star, as did the Israelites with a pillar of fire; he informs them of future dangers in their dreams, that having first seen his Son, they might in the next place see his salvation.”

In 1648, Vaughan published his *Anthroposophia Theomagica*, which was a treatise of the nature of human beings and their state after death. Vaughan was also the author of several other magico-mystical works. In 1652, he translated the Rosicrucian manifesto *Fama Fraternitatis Rosae Crucis* into English. The anonymous tract was first published in Kassel, Germany, in 1614.

“Have thy heart in heaven and thy hands upon the earth,” Vaughan advised his readers. “Ascend in piety and descend in charity. For this is the Nature of Light and the way of the children.”

Jane Leade

Jane Ward Leade (1624-1704) expanded on the alchemical teachings of Jakob Boehme with intuitive information from her own visionary experiences “in the light of the Virgin Sophia’s wisdom.” Leade recorded her spiritual visions in a series of publications that became the foundation of the “Philadelphian Society.” The word “philadelphian” comes from the Greek words for “brotherly love”.⁶⁰

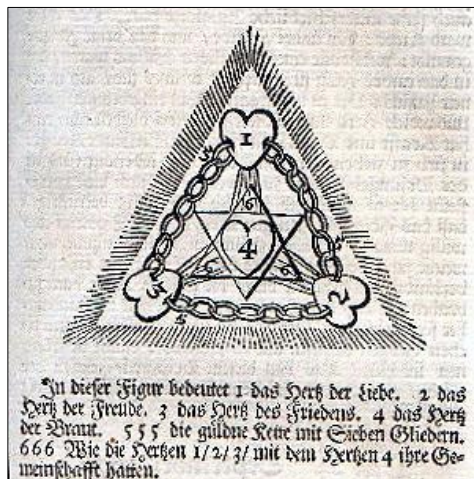


Figure 44. Philadelphian symbol for the four kinds of hearts: 1) Love, 2) Joy, 3) Peace, and they all come together in 4) the heart of the Bride.

Leade (sometimes written “Lead”) was a disciple of English alchemist and Christian mystic John Pordage (1607–1681). Pordage followed the teachings of Jakob Boehme and founded the Behmenist Group. (Jakob Boehme was known as “Jakob Behmen” in England.) Pordage’s group became known as the “Philadelphian Society” when Leade took over when he died.

Leade’s writings focus on the existence of the light of Sophia and personal redemption through the ascension of the soul in a new spiritual substance (or *spiritus*). Her teachings have been called a form of spiritual alchemy, and her ideas are similar to those found in the Gnostic, Kabbalistic, and Rosicrucian traditions. Leade also believed in the presence of the divine spark in all things (panpsychism) and that there is a monadic, nondualistic essence of the Holy Spirit in everyone’s soul.

Most scholars believe Leade used the pseudonym “Leona Constantia” to publish her final alchemical manuscript *Sonnenblume der Weisen* (“Sunflower of the Wise”) in 1704. The book instructs how to create the Philosopher’s Stone from the coagulation of the “Water of Life” and “Our Earth.” The “Water of Life” is generally interpreted to refer to the life force of a person, while “Our Earth” refers to one’s subtle body or *spiritus* substance.

⁶⁰ Julie Hirst. *Jane Lead: Biography of a Seventeenth-Century Mystic*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005. p. 27.

Isaac Newton

The great English physicist and mathematician Isaac Newton (1643-1727) practiced a powerful combination of practical and spiritual alchemy. He wanted to go back before the Fall to a state of perfect knowledge. He was convinced angels came to Adam with a way to return to the Garden of Eden, and the alchemical *Emerald Tablet* of Hermes described that path.



Figure 45. Portrait of Sir Isaac Newton.

For Newton, alchemists were holy adepts seeking the “Angelical Stone” (also known as the “Philosopher’s Stone”), which was a unitary state of higher consciousness that once achieved would enable communication with angels. Also, Newton believed the spiritual state of the alchemist was intimately connected to the outcome of his or her experiments.

Newton viewed the alchemical marriage of the Sun and Moon as a merging of the solar Fire (of heightened consciousness) with the lunar matrix of Water (the Subtle Substance or *spiritus*).

He speculated that all material bodies have corresponding bodies of light into which they can be transformed, and he connected this idea with the “Lightbody” described by some alchemists.

Although Newton’s initial studies of light led him to propose his

Corpuscular Theory that light was composed of particles of matter, he later admitted he was uncomfortable with the theory because it “robbed light of its divine essence.” He even speculated light might exist as both particles of matter and waves of energy but felt the concept was too controversial for his time and never published it.

“The changing of bodies into light and light into bodies,” Newton observed, “is very comfortable to the course of Nature, which seems delighted with such transmutations.” Newton’s intuition about light proved correct, but he was also right in his assumption that the world was not ready for it. Impassioned quibbling over the particle or wave nature of light dominated physics for the next century.

Prayers of the Alchemists

Most European alchemists in the Middle Ages and Renaissance engaged in prayers to the Light or divine Mind, although a few practiced a form of prayer from Christian alchemy that substituted iconic symbols from the life of Christ for alchemical processes. But for all alchemists, the principle of *Ora et Labora* (or “Pray and Work”) meant opening up a spiritual channel to the Above to draw down sacred energy into the Work both in the laboratory and within the alchemist.

The Light Supreme

Light Supreme, who art the Divine in Nature and dwells in its innermost parts as in Heaven, hallowed be thy qualities and laws! Wherever thou art, all is brought to perfection; may the realm of thy Knowledge become subject unto thee.

May our will in all our work be only thee, the self-moving Power of Light! And as in the whole of Nature thou accomplishes all things, so accomplish all things in our work also.

Give us of the Dew of Heaven, and the Fat of the Earth, the Fruits of Sun and Moon from the Tree of Life. And forgive us all errors which we have committed in our work without knowledge of thee, as we seek to turn from their errors those who have offended our precepts. And leave us not to our own darkness and our own science but deliver us from all evil through the perfection of thy Work, Amen.⁶¹

An Incorruptible Stone

Oh, most singular and unspeakable Presence — first and last in the universe — heighten the fury of my fire and burn away the dross of my being. Cleanse my soiled soul; bathe me in your awesome Light.

Set me free from my past; cut me loose from my boundaries. Unite me with the One Thing hidden in my life wherein is my only strength. Fill me with your Presence. Allow me to see through your Eye; grant me entry to your Mind; let me resonate with your Sacred Will.

⁶¹ From *Über die Zauberkräfte der Natur* (“About the Magical Powers of Nature”) by Karl von Eckartshausen, Munich 1819. Translated by Joscelyn Godwin.)

Make me transparent to your flame, and fashion me into a lens for your Light only. Transmute me into an incorruptible Stone in your eternal service, like the golden Light that surrounds you.⁶²

Prayer to Saturn

O Master of sublime name and great power, supreme Master; O Master Saturn: Thou, the Cold, the Sterile, the Mournful, the Pernicious; Thou, whose life is sincere and whose word sure; Thou, the Sage and Solitary, the Impenetrable; Thou, whose promises are kept; Thou who art weak and weary; Thou who hast cares greater than any other, who knowest neither pleasure nor joy; Thou, the old and cunning, master of all artifice, deceitful, wise, and judicious; Thou who bringest prosperity or ruin, and makest men to be happy or unhappy! I conjure thee, O Supreme Father, by Thy great benevolence and Thy generous bounty, to do for me what I ask.⁶³

Seal Me in Thine Divine Light!

All holy and hallowed Trinity! Cause me to sink into the abyss of Thy limitless eternal Fire, for only in that Fire can the mortal nature of man be changed into humble dust, while the new body of the Salt union lies in the light. Oh, melt me and transmute me in this Thy holy Fire, so that on the day at Thy command the fiery waters of the Holy Spirit draw me out from the dark dust, giving the new birth and making me alive with His breath.

May I also be exalted through the humble humility of Thy Son, rising through His assistance out of the dust and ashes and changing into a pure spiritual body of rainbow colors like unto the transparent, crystal like, paradisiacal gold, that my own nature may be redeemed and purified like the elements before me in these glasses and bottles.

Diffuse me in the waters of life as though I were in the wine cellar of the eternal Solomon. Here the Fire of Thy love will receive new fuel and will blaze forth so that no streams can extinguish it. Through the aid of this divine Fire, may I in the end be found worthy to be called into the illumination of the righteous.

⁶² Compiled and translated from various Latin and German Renaissance works by Dennis William Hauck.

⁶³ From *The Survival of the Pagan Gods: The Mythological Tradition and its Place in Renaissance Humanism and Art* by Jean Seznec (translated by Barbara Sessions), Princeton University Press, 1995, p. 53. Originally from the 10th Century Arabic book *Ghāyat al-Hakīm*, also known by the Latin name "*The Picatrix*." It dates around 954 CE.

May I then be sealed up with the light of the new world that I may also attain unto the immortality and glory where there should be no more alternation of light and darkness. Amen.⁶⁴

The Self-Moving Source

Hail, pure self-moving Source, O Form, pure for receiving the Light! The Light of all things unites itself with thee alone.

Most blessed art thou among all receptive forms, and blessed is the Fruit that thou conceives, the Essence of Light united with warm substance.

Pure Form – Mother of the most perfect Being – lift thyself up to the Light for us, now!⁶⁵

Cease Not Thine Operations on Me!

Eternal source of all which is – Thou who sends spirits of error and of darkness to the untruthful, which cut them off from Thy love – do Thou send unto him who seeks Thee a spirit of truth, uniting him forever with Thee.

May the fire of this spirit consume me all the traces of the former man, and, having consumed them, may it produce from those ashes a new man, on whom Thy sacred hand shall not disdain to pour a holy Chrism! Be this the end of penitence and its long toils, and may Thy life, which is One everywhere, transform my whole being in the unity of Thine image, my heart in the unity of Thy love, my activity in the unity of the works of justice, and my thought in the unity of all lights.

Thou impose great sacrifices on man, only to compel him to seek in Thee all his riches and all his delights, and Thou forces him to seek all these treasures in Thee only because Thou knows that they alone can make him happy, for Thou alone possess them, who hast engendered and created them. Truly, O God of my life, I can find nowhere save in Thee the root and realization of my being. Thou also hast said that in the heart of man alone canst Thou find Thy repose.

⁶⁴ This Medieval German prayer was first translated in *Alchemy: The Art of Knowing* by Jeremy Catto, p 53.

⁶⁵ From *Über die Zauberkräfte der Natur* ("About the Magical Powers of Nature") by Karl von Eckartshausen, Munich 1819. Translated by Joscelyn Godwin.

Cease not, therefore, for one instant thine operations upon me, that not only may I live, but that Thy name may be known among the nations. Thy prophets have declared that the dead cannot praise Thee; let death then never come near me, for I burn to offer Thee immortal praise; I burn with desire that the Eternal Son of Truth may never have to reproach the heart of man with the smallest clouding of Thy splendor or the least diminution of its fullness.

God of my life, the utterance of whose Name accomplishes all things, restore to my nature that which Thou didst first impart to it, and I will manifest that Name among the nations, and they shall learn that Thou alone art their God, Thou alone their essential life, as Thou only art the movement and motive principle of all beings.

Do Thou sow the seed of Thy desires in the soul of man, in that field where none can contest with Thee, since it is Thou who hast brought it into existence? Sow Thy desires therein, that the soul, by the force of Thy love, may be snatched from the depths which hold it and would swallow it up forever. Abolish for me the realm of images; scatter the fantastic barriers which place an immense interval and spread thick darkness between Thy living light and me, entombing me in their folds.

Show unto me the sacred character and the divine seal of which Thou art the custodian; pierce the center of my soul with the fire which burns in Thee, that my soul may burn with Thee till it knows Thine ineffable life and the inexhaustible delights of Thine eternal existence. Too feeble to endure the weight of Thy Name, I leave in Thy hands the task of erecting its complete edifice and of laying Thyself its first foundations in the depths of that soul which Thou has given me for a torch, showing light to the nations, that they may no more dwell in darkness.

Thanks be unto Thee, O God of peace and love! Thanks be unto Thee, because Thou hast been mindful of me, and hast not willed that my soul should want, lest Thine enemies should say that the Father forges His children or is unable to deliver them. Amen.⁶⁶

Prayer and Meditation in Quietism

During the late 1670s into the 1680s, a heretical movement known as Quietism became popular in Spain, France, and Italy, and many alchemists found the methods of Quietism useful in their own prayers and meditation. Quietism called for a state of complete spiritual passivity and detachment from all worldly concerns, believing that this was the path to achieving divine union.

⁶⁶ From *Le Tableau Naturel* by alchemist L.C. de Saint Martin, p.178. Translated by Arthur E. Waite.

Quietism was based on the writings of the Spanish Christian mystic Miguel de Molinos (1640-1696). He published his *Spiritual Guide* in 1675, in which he recommended passivity and contemplation in total repose of the spirit. He taught that meditation was an important stage of spiritual life, but in order to pass into the state of contemplation, one must leave behind meditative practices.



Figure 46. Drawing of Christian mystic Miguel de Molinos.

Unfortunately, in 1687, Pope Innocent XI labeled Quietism a heresy because it taught inner stillness over vocal prayer and offered a way to divine union outside the Church. If divine union were possible through private contemplation in one's own chambers, the Church ruled, then priests, prayer, and sacraments would be unnecessary. Molinos was imprisoned for the rest of his life, and several of his followers were also sent to jail.⁶⁷

Quietism teaches meditative practices based on the following three precepts: 1) One can achieve spiritual peace and perfection by achieving a unitary state of consciousness; 2) This is attained by the annihilation of the personal will and the passive absorption in contemplation of divine things. 3) With continued practice, it is possible to attain ultimate union (or re-union) in the divine mind of God.

To practice Quietism, follow the four steps listed below in a private place where you will not be disturbed. Don't set a time limit or use

an alarm to end a Quieting session. Do it as long as you can and then naturally withdraw from it. Clarity of intent is what makes this work; once that is lost, it is time to stop. Don't proceed to the next step until you have successfully completed the one you are working on. Then move seamlessly from one step to the next until the whole regimen is mastered and can be performed in one sitting.

⁶⁷ Robert P Baird, 'Introduction: Part One', in Miguel de Molinos, *The Spiritual Guide*, ed and trans by Robert P Baird, (New York: Paulist Press, 2010), pp1-20.

Step 1—Quieting the Mind

To begin the Quieting process, sit comfortably with your spine upright and close your eyes. Do not perform Quieting while lying down. The best time to practice is early morning, after a nap, on a day off, or other time of solitude without interruptions.

This basic process of Quieting takes place through all levels of body, mind, and soul. Beginning on the level of your body, slowly withdraw your attention from physical sensations and sensory inputs. Start “softening” the body by relaxing the muscles and releasing tension.

On the level of mind, Quieting requires stilling the constant chatter of thoughts and the swirling chaos of emotional energy. During this initial stage, the mental faculties are not yet completely purified, and one tends to be distracted by lingering thoughts, emotions, memories, fantasies, planning, worrying, and other impressions in the mind. Simply ignore these without deliberately trying to control them in any way. Try not to invest any energy pushing them away or attempting to bury them. Let them dissolve by not paying attention to them.

This can be especially difficult if you have a hyperactive mind that is always looking for things to do, tweaking things, or looking ahead to prevent some imagined catastrophe. This kind of restless mental environment can be tamed by the Quieting method if you clearly understand that you are being driven by your nerves not your mind.

Other distractions that arise during this kind of activity are insights, breakthroughs, and self-reflected comments such as “Am I doing this right,” “I feel so peaceful,” and so on. All these attachments—even the positive ones—will cause the mind to descend into worldly concerns.

The mind should be clear without any ideas or impressions. It might take some time to achieve this state, but it will manifest eventually if you maintain an attitude of dissolution and surrender and keep reducing everything to a state of simple awareness. When mental quieting has been attained, your attention should be rested behind the eyes or forehead.

On the level of soul, the Quieting process is one of release from earthly desires and ambitions. It is a way of soothing your inner being by letting go of nagging feelings of guilt, greed, pride—intrusive desires of any kind. It is also necessary to overcome feelings of deficiency, sinfulness, or inferiority and to realize the soul is infinite and not tied to this world or to the acts of any temporal ego that emerged from it. Successful quieting of the soul results in a feeling of loving innocence and transcendent peacefulness.

Once body, mind, and soul are quieted, the work focuses on the Cultivation of Silence. The primary work here is on the individual will, which becomes lost or absorbed into the divine presence within the sacred Stillness. Remember, it is the Stillness itself that dissolves you.

Step 2—Reversion

After Quieting is mastered, move directly to the second step, which is Reversion. During Reversion, the focus is on surrendering oneself completely to the divine Will and seeking higher guidance to replace your own personal will. Ironically, this occurs most easily when a person is at the end of their rope—frustrated and disappointed in their efforts to change themselves.

It can happen to anyone trying to do something extraordinary with their lives and being thwarted by peers, family, careers, social expectations, prejudice, politics, or other cultural restrictions.

To really understand Reversion, you need to understand the ways in which you have rejected the divine connections in your life. Some people throw themselves into daily chores, busy work, obligations, social media, or jobs, and forget or never acknowledge the spiritual level of their lives. They deny mystical experiences or think accepting such ideas would somehow interfere with their practical goals.

Others are consumed by soul-robbing careers that demand all their time and energy, and they do not have the luxury of experimenting with spirituality. Still others are hardened into a materialistic approach to the world through greed, abuse, rejection, or painful experiences, or they just lack love in their lives.

The practice during this stage is to reflect on your failures, put them in perspective, and accept higher spiritual powers. Reflect on how your competitive, materialistic approach has robbed your life of depth and meaning. Acknowledge the ways in which your soul has been damaged because of it. All that should remain in your mind is the sincere urge to be healed and made whole again.

Step 3—Recollection

The third step in the Quietist method is Recollection, which is a process of transcending duality and affirming the divine Source of all things. The preceding two steps must be mastered completely before proceeding into this state of Recollection.

The work of Recollection begins with intense mental focus in which one concentrates on the withdrawal of the soul from worldly temptations and enters devout contemplation on the power of spiritual passion. The primary tool of Recollection is deep contemplation, which must be practiced inside the heart and not intellectually. A deep piety will develop in you that is beyond any that can be achieved through religious dogma or ceremonial performances.

This innocence or purity in the heart becomes a steadfast guide, as the soul desires to be led by the divine Will only. In practice, one must agree to the necessity of divine assistance – something totally separate from one's being – that will provide the confidence and actualized faith to proceed to the final stage in this process.

It is important to persevere in a state of deep contemplation and continue residing in the heart until your personal ego dissolves. In terms of spiritual chemistry, the vessel of the soul must be hermetically sealed so nothing from the mundane world contaminates it. Suddenly, you feel “refreshed and renewed” by the unmistakable presence of divine grace.

At that point, contemplation must cease immediately without discursive thinking of any kind, and the methods by which you achieved this state must be abandoned. Your soul must allow the divine to work within it – and through it. Your soul must bloom naturally without hindrance and allow the influx of grace to continue if possible. The work is now proceeding only from the Above.

Step 4—Infused Contemplation

The final step of the Quietist method might take some time to achieve because the flowering of your soul depends on maintaining an open gateway to divine grace. Proceeding directly from the previous step, you enter a state of passive contemplation in which you witness an infusion of divine energy. It is experienced as an expansive fascination and profound humbling in the presence of something greater. You feel completely fulfilled, fully alive, and require nothing else. The frenzied search for truth ends, and you exist in a state of gnostic bliss. It is a rare and wonderful state beyond time and space that human beings can – and have – achieved.

From the Quietist perspective, each personal soul is also part of the greater Soul of the universe. Therefore, your soul is also the center of the universe because a person can become one with the divine Mind by cohabitating in the same sacred space. To stay in this holy place, continuous self-denial and mortification are required. Pride and self-love on any level must be banished, so that all that remains is the simple and pure desire to remain in the presence of the divine, which is the “soul's sincere desire and true home.”

The Modern Era

Mary Anne Atwood

Mary Anne Atwood (1817-1910) was an English author known for her works on Hermeticism and spiritual alchemy. Her most famous book was *A Suggestive Inquiry into the Hermetic Mystery*. Her father, Thomas South, was a researcher into the history of spirituality, and asked her to write a book on alchemy. She did meticulous research on the history of alchemy, and her father published the book at his own expense in 1850. As was customary for women writers at the time, the book was published anonymously.



Figure 47. Photo of Mary Anne Atwood.

Reading the complete book for the first time after publication, Thomas realized his daughter had revealed many Hermetic secrets that were better left unpublished. He immediately bought up the remaining stock and, with his daughter at his side, burnt them. Only a few copies of the book survived. Mary Anne continued writing but never published any more books after that.

Mary Anne's *Suggestive Inquiry* bears a telling subtitle: "With a Dissertation on the More Celebrated of the Alchemical Philosophers, Being an Attempt Towards the Recovery of the Ancient Experiment of Nature." Apparently, she came closer to actually recovering the ancient secrets than anyone expected.

Mary Anne married an Anglican minister in 1859 and moved to Thirsk in North Yorkshire, England, where she spent the rest of her life. She died in 1910

at the age of 93. Her final words were: "I cannot find my center of gravity!" After her death, *A Suggestive Inquiry* was reissued in Mary Anne's married name in 1918. It proved very successful and was credited with fueling the rediscovery of the ancient spiritual interpretation of alchemy that spread through Europe and the United States.

"Those who dwell in the realm of sublime consciousness," Atwood wrote in her *Suggestive Inquiry Into the Hermetic Mystery*, "will constantly seek refinement, for it is desire that ignites the spark of progress. Without our yearning, the efforts of the Art will be futile, as our will is the key to transformation. And as we embark on this journey of self-discovery, we unlock the secrets of the universe."

Herbert Silberer

Herbert Silberer (1882-1923) was an Austrian psychoanalyst who, along with Carl Jung, were colleagues of Sigmund Freud. Silberer did groundbreaking research into dreams and archetypal symbols, and in 1914, wrote a book titled *Probleme der Mystik und Ihrer Symbolik* (German for “Problems of Mysticism and Its Symbolism”), which explored the spiritual roots of alchemy, Hermeticism, and Rosicrucianism.⁶⁸



Figure 48. Photo of Herbert Silberer.

In his book, Silberer unites the esoteric traditions of the world into an introverted descent of the individual into the soul in which immense psychological and spiritual treasures can be discovered. He suggests that Freudian analysis does not probe deep enough into the psychological and spiritual meanings of dreams, inner mental processes, and human creativity.

Silberer’s vision was to merge Freud’s rationalist ideas with heightened intuition to create a “Royal Art” in which alchemical transmutation of the soul is expressed in the various spiritual traditions of the world. “The perfecting of mankind,” he concluded, “is the Great Work of alchemy.”

Freud stubbornly held to his belief that psychological problems were sexually based and could best be treated with drugs that suppressed their symptoms. Unfortunately, those symptoms often resurfaced with a vengeance. Freud and his inner circle mercilessly denounced Silberer’s work, and he was forced to

leave. He struggled with his career after being shunned by Freud and suffered a gradual psychological breakdown. Nine years after Freud rebuked him, Herbert Silberer committed suicide by hanging.

After studying Silberer’s book, Carl Jung could not help but agree with his colleague, and he adapted many of Silberer’s findings in his own study of alchemy – for which he gave his former colleague full credit.

When Jung confronted Freud, the two giants of psychoanalysis got into a heated argument and they split up. Jung later admitted in his memoirs that being ostracized by his mentor nearly overwhelmed him too.

⁶⁸ Later published in English as *Hidden Symbolism of Alchemy and the Occult Arts*. Translated by Ely Jelliffe Smith. Moffat, Yard and Company, New York, 1917.

Carl Gustav Jung

Carl Gustav Jung (1875-1961) was a Swiss psychiatrist who was a protégé of Sigmund Freud. But the two men parted ways in 1913, when Jung realized his avenue of research would never be accepted by Freud. Eventually, Jung developed the system of analytical psychology that was completely separate from Freud's methods of psychoanalysis.⁶⁹

Jung credited his colleague, psychoanalyst Herbert Silberer, with introducing him to the archetypal power of alchemy, but Jung's interest in the subject peaked in 1928 when he was given a manuscript on Chinese alchemy (*Secret of the Golden Flower*, translated by Richard Wilhelm). By 1930, the focus of Jung's research and writings had shifted to the psychological and spiritual significance of the ancient craft.

In 1944, Jung's breakthrough book, *Psychology and Alchemy*, was published. In that book, Jung argued that alchemy was about the transformation of the soul from a leaden corrupted state to a golden perfected state. These metaphors described the process of psychological "individuation," which was Jung's term for personal transformation or growth.

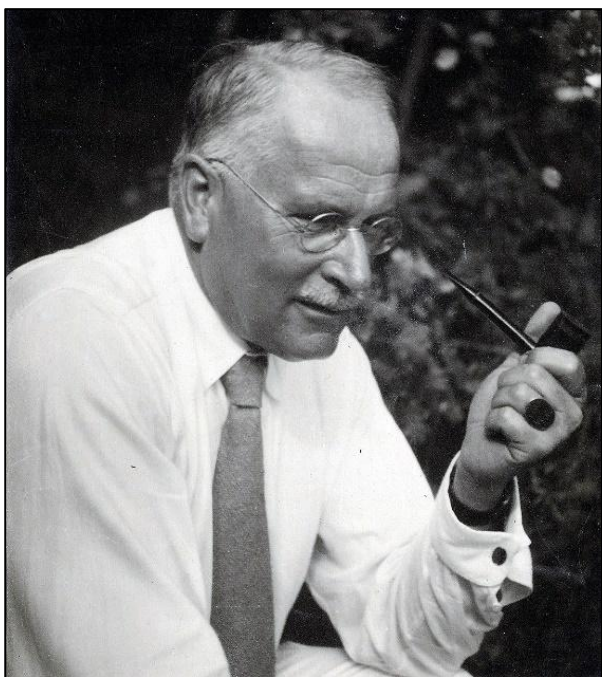


Figure 49. Photo of Carl Gustav Jung.

"For Jung, alchemy is not only part of the pre-history of chemistry, that is, not only laboratory work," noted historian of alchemy George Florin Calian, "but also an essential part of the history of psychology as the history of the discovery of the deep structure of the psyche and its unconscious. Jung emphasized the significance of the symbolic structure of alchemical texts, a structure that is understood as a way independent of laboratory research, as a structure *per se*."⁷⁰

Two years after Jung's death, his last major book on alchemy, *Mysterium Coniunctionis* (or "The Sacred Marriage") was published in English as part of the 20-volume *Collected Works of C. G. Jung*. That book—extraordinary for its intuitive depth and insight—focused on the alchemical archetype known as the "Sacred Marriage of the Sun and Moon." Jung

believed the Sun symbolized spirit (or energy) and the Moon soul (or matter), and their union through the alchemical phases (Blackening, Whitening, Reddening, and Yellowing) resulted in a new light of consciousness and the transformation (or individuation) of the alchemist.⁷¹

⁶⁹ Gerhard Wehr. *Jung: a Biography*. Moshupa, Dorset: Shambhala, 1987. p. 9. ISBN 978-0-87773-455-0.

⁷⁰ George Florin Calian. *Alkimia Operativa and Alkimia Speculativa. Some Modern Controversies on the Historiography of Alchemy*. Budapest: Annual of Medieval Studies at CEU. 2010. pp. 167–168.

⁷¹ Christophe Franklin Wagner. *Of Books and Fire: Approaching the Alchemy of Carl Gustav Jung* (Thesis). doi:10.17863/CAM.37801. 2019.

Rene Schwaller de Lubicz

René Schwaller de Lubicz (1887-1961) was a French philosopher-chemist who established an alchemical research center (the *Station Scientifique Suhalia*) in Switzerland with separate laboratories in chemistry and physics, as well as manufacturing facilities for his homeopathic tinctures. The center also had an astronomical observatory, machine shop, print shop, woodshop, glassblowing shop, and theater.

Suhalia was where Schwaller began writing in earnest about his alchemical philosophy of matter, mind, and the evolution of consciousness. Sometimes he wrote under the name *Aor* (Hebrew for "Light of the Higher Mind").⁷²



Figure 50. Photo of Rene Schwaller de Lubicz.

Schwaller spent 15 years in Egypt and wrote numerous books on Egyptian mysticism and cosmology, including *The Temple in Man*, *The Egyptian Miracle*, and *Esotericism and Symbol*. He concluded that every aspect of ancient Egyptian society was built around a central vision of cosmic harmony and humanity's place in the evolution of consciousness.

Schwaller also believed Egyptian hieroglyphics were a way of experiencing the "simultaneity of opposite states." He named this alchemical technique *symbolique*, which is a way of holding together the object of sense perception and the content of inner knowing, in a kind of creative polarity. T

he primary *symbolique* of alchemy is holding together simultaneously both spiritual and material interpretations of the Work.⁷³

In his book *Symbol and the Symbolic*, Schwaller wrote: "The observation of a simultaneity of mutually contradictory states demonstrates the existence of two forms of intelligence: 1) Our rational, scientific intelligence of the mind and the senses, and 2) The intuitive and profound Intelligence of the Heart." The search for the Intelligence of the Heart became his life work.

⁷² Deborah Lawlor, "R. A. Schwaller de Lubicz and *Nature Word*", in R. A. Schwaller de Lubicz, *Nature Word*, page 52. Lindisfarne Press, 1982. ISBN 0-940262-00-2.

⁷³ Gary Lachman. "Rene Schwaller de Lubicz and the Intelligence of the Heart" in *Quest* magazine, #89, January-February 2000. Pp. 4-11.

Henry Corbin

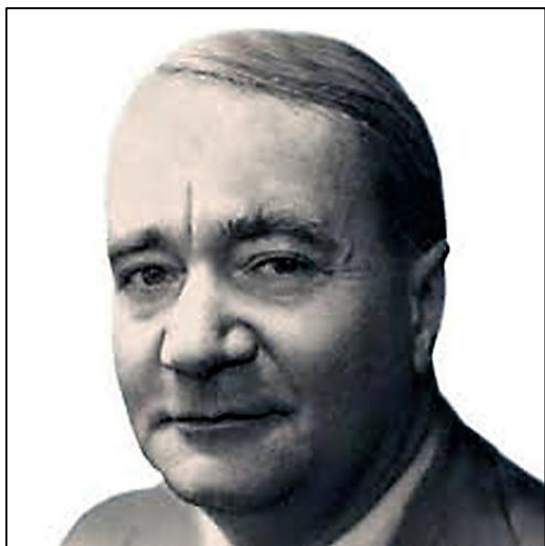


Figure 52. Photo of Henry Corbin.

French philosopher Henry Corbin (1903-1978) spent much of his academic career studying ancient alchemical writings, and he concluded that alchemy is a spiritual practice that seeks “the union of the human soul with its heavenly counterpart.”

Like Maria Prophetissa and Muhzin Fayz Kashani, Corbin believed that alchemy could unite the spiritual and material realms. According to Corbin, this union takes place in a mysterious zone of light between spirit and matter he named the *Mundus Imaginalis* (or “World of Imagination”).

The *Mundus Imaginalis* is a very real space where the spiritual world becomes objective. This intermediary psychoid realm is the juncture between mind and

matter, between the eternal and the transient. He defined it as the “mesocosm” between the material microcosm and the spiritual macrocosm.

This mesocosmic space is the subject of many ancient Egyptian, Greek, and Arabic texts, including the *Emerald Tablet*. Paracelsus called this liminal world of archetypal light the “True Imagination”, and it is what Wolfgang Pauli and Carl Jung described in the Jung-Pauli Conjecture. Jung also applied the technique in what he called “active imagination” with his patients.

Corbin viewed alchemy as an *Ars Hieratica* (or “Hieratic Art”) — a union of the spiritual and the physical experience of Nature. He taught that alchemists could liberate the archetypal spiritual energy in metals through meditation and somehow incorporate it into their being. This process led to the development of a subtle body of spiritual substance (or *spiritus*). Alchemists called this process in the laboratory “animating the Mercury” of an inert material to imbue it with life. Mercury was considered the “Mother of the Metals” and also a symbol of the light of imagination.⁷⁴

Corbin looked for confirmation of this process in the ancient hieratical practice of “statue animation,” which means “animating” or ensouling an inanimate sculpture. The word is from the Latin *anima* which means “soul.” Animating a statue does not necessarily mean it moves. Rather it connotes the creation of a living intelligence in the object. Generally, the object must have some sort of spiritual or personally eidetic significance — what the Alexandrian Greeks called an *eikon*.

⁷⁴ Henry Corbin. *Spiritual Bodies and Celestial Earth*. Princeton University Press. 1977. pp.176–179.

There are numerous reports of successful animation rituals in the literature, such as when the philosopher Maximus of Ephesus (310-372 CE) visited the Temple of Hekate in the city of Ephesus. After a short ritual meditation, the respected philosopher reported that the hands of the statue of the Goddess Hekate were set ablaze and she began to laugh out loud at being animated.

Part III – A Basic Alchemical Meditation

Following is a Basic Alchemical Meditation compounded from meditative techniques used by alchemists such as Paracelsus, Basil Valintine, and Jakob Boehme. Each phase is a separate meditation and can be practiced separately from the others.

There are three general steps in the full meditation that correspond to the three phases of alchemy. The first phase is the *Nigredo* (darkening, death, and putrefaction of the ego), which consists of two operations in which one attempts to Disengage Physically and Disengage Mentally from the world. The second phase is the *Albedo* (whitening and purification) in which one achieves original innocence or Zero-state Consciousness. The third phase is *Rubedo* (reddening or empowered integration into a new level of being) that is found in continued Meditation in the Pure Light.

Overall, the first two phases represent a progressive resurrection and purification of the light of consciousness to prepare for the transformative, one-pointed “Meditation in the Pure Light” phase. In that phase, alchemists feel they are working with the *logoic* light to transform reality in not only the inner lab or soul but also in the objective material reality of their “laboratory” or outer world.

Whether you are a novice meditator or experienced, the following instructions should be helpful in achieving Meditation in the Pure Light. But feel free to follow your own path in meditation or customize these steps to fit your regimen. The most important lesson is to grasp is the dual nature of our reality – the spiritual and material realms in which we exist. The bridge between those two realms can only be found in the Pure Light – in what Paracelsus called the “True Imagination.”

1) Disengage Physically.

The first part of the *Nigredo* phase is to detach from the everyday world. Isolate yourself physically from the world in a place where you won’t be disturbed. Delink by turning off your phone, computer, TV, radio, music player, or any other electronic attachment to the outside world.

Find a quiet location or put in earplugs or noise-canceling earphones and sit in a chair; don’t lie down. Keep your back comfortably straight and fold your hands in your lap to prevent fidgeting. Focus on the feeling that your fully relaxed body is immovable and cannot be disturbed.

The sign that you are successful in these endeavors is that time seems to slow down and sometimes even stop; your awareness is fully focused on the static moment before you. Now, just relax and cultivate the timeless silence for a while.

This phase of physical relaxation in space and time is an important part of disengagement. By relaxing completely into your body in the present moment, you are prioritizing your own body space over the external demands of the world.

In this moment, you must accept yourself, “as is,” without any striving or dissatisfaction with who you are. This is necessary to completely let go and relax, and *relaxation* is the key to disengaging fully from the world.

Realize the inherent nature of your body-mind as a vehicle of travel through time — as you age and mature along the way. Only with this objective realization is it possible for you to transcend the limits of this process and return to an entirely natural, spontaneous, genuine, and innocent state of relaxation in time and space.

Once you are completely relaxed, continue deepening this process of disengaging physically by “discarding” the body entirely. Turn down your bodily sensations and focus on just, “being,” without extension into time and space.

To help you understand what we are talking about, let’s take a look at a famous thought experiment by the Arabian alchemist Ibn Sina (980-1037 CE), known as “Avicenna” in the West. The Persian genius wrote over 450 books and profoundly influenced European philosophy.

In a chapter titled, “On the Soul,” in his book “*Kitab Al-Shifa*” (or “Book of Healing,” 1020), Ibn Sina presented a famous thought experiment (called “the Floating Man”) that supported his conjecture that the soul exists separate from the body and is still self-aware:

“Imagine a human being having been created in a single stroke,” wrote Ibn Sina, “created perfect and complete but with his vision obscured so that he cannot perceive external entities; created falling through the void, in such a manner that he is not struck by the firmness of the air in any way that compels him to feel it, and with his limbs outstretched so that they do not come in contact with or touch each other.

“Then contemplate the following: can he be assured of the existence of himself?

“The truth is that he does not have any doubt that his ‘self’ exists, even without asserting that he has any exterior limbs, nor internal organs, neither heart nor brain, nor any one of the exterior bodily things at all.

“Rather he can affirm the true existence of himself, without asserting that this self has any extension in space at all. Therefore, the self – the existence of which I am asserting – is a unique characteristic, in as much that it is not the same as the body or the limbs, which have not yet been discovered or ascertained.

“Thus, that which is ascertained (the self), does have a way of being sure of the existence of the soul as something other than the body.”

Even in Ibn Sina’s existentially stark scenario, a human being would still be self-conscious and capable of determining their own self-existential essence or soul. The thought experiment suggests that the soul exists at a level of permanence in time and transcendence of space. It also must be an immaterial substance, independent of the body, because it can only be perceived intellectually.

Now try to isolate that essence or the “soul” in you – the part of you that is aware and alive even without a body. Minimize your body’s feedback from the physical world; detach and detangle yourself from your organs and nerves. Relax completely and let go of all sensory input and see if you can find the deepest essence of being – your soul – a secret part of you described in Ibn Sina’s thought experiment. Each of us has this hidden realm of soul waiting within us.

2) Disengage Mentally.

The second part of the *Nigredo* phase is to disengage mentally. The realization that you have an inner heaven where your soul resides is a profound experience that will change the way you relate to the material world. But as you continue your meditative work, you will come to the realization that there is also a greater or Universal Soul in the cosmos itself. Call it what you want – God, Supreme Being, One Mind, Source, Monad, etc. – humans have always sensed something greater than themselves at work in the universe.

This phase of meditative work focuses on an ascetic denial of anything that does not reflect the purity of the One Mind or its *logos* unfolding in Nature. It includes practices of isolation and withdrawal from the world, as well as meditations that limit thoughts to induce states of relaxed awareness or mindfulness.

To reach this highest level of universal Soul in meditation, you must continue your disentanglement from the everyday world, which is not complete until you extricate yourself mentally. The first step in this process is to penetrate the veil of vanity embedded in your personality – the excessive pride you have in your own abilities, appearance, or achievements. Vanity is the primary motivating force in most people and ruled so much of human history. “Vanity of vanities; all is vanity,” lamented the author of Ecclesiastes (Verse 1.2; 12.8).

But there is a deeper layer of vanity that must also be conquered – the existential arrogance in human culture (what the Greeks called *hubris*) that makes us believe we have dominion over Nature or over other nations or religions. “Oh vanity, how little is your force acknowledged or your operations discerned,” wrote British author Henry Fielding (1707-1754). “How wantonly do you deceive mankind under different disguises!”

Everyone is vain and egocentric, and most of what surfaces in our everyday consciousness comes from the friction of competing egos in a neurotic society. Frustration, jealousy, anger, guilt, regret, lust, and just random glib nonsense dominate most people’s stream of consciousness. To turn off this relentless mental streaming, you have to stop having thoughts to free up some bandwidth – or as Buddhists put it: “Shut off the Monkey Brain.”

With your eyes either closed or half-opened gazing in front of you, shut down your senses and don’t react to any outside disturbances. Become comfortably numb to the world, and then remain stubbornly in this immovable, timeless state of mind.

Unyoking from a lifetime of habitual, addictive thinking is a challenging task requiring intense introspective honesty. Feelings are fleeting energies that dissipate over time; but thoughts are things. Thoughts accumulate and clutter up your mental space.

Jakob Boehme’s instructions go right to the point: “We can all experience the monadic state before Nature and creature by extricating our consciousness from all that is the effect of our time and place.”

3) Enter Zero-state Consciousness.

The second phase of *Albedo* is to achieve a pure, Zero-state Consciousness. This is a heightened awareness marked by a lack of mundane thoughts and emotions. It is the state of consciousness associated with *nirvana* and other peak experiences in meditation.

Chinese philosopher Lao Tsu (circa 550 BCE) said of this state: “The original One is the Profound Mystery. Always without desire, the mystery can be experienced. But filled with desire, the outer fringe is all we see.”

The fastest way to achieve the Zero-state is to just stop thinking – break the chain of thoughts – but still remain aware. Stop worrying, stop being afraid, stop reacting, stop emoting, and withdraw yourself from the chatter of the world. If you achieve a Zero-state Mind, you will discover the key is in the silence it creates, and you will realize that there is much more to you than just thoughts.

To break down the wall of thoughts that traps you in a limited set of “pre-programmed” responses and behaviors, you have to recognize the duality built into human rational thought processes. Like most people, you probably process thoughts in binary patterns like computers – each thought engenders its opposite, and everything requires a “yes” or “no” answer.

For every positive thought, its negative will come to mind. Before long you sink into a web of spiraling thoughts that lead to conclusions you are not sure of. You’re caught in *dualistic doubt* – you must make a decision to keep the chain of thoughts moving or create a loop in which the same thought recurs again and again. That’s just the way thinking works for most people.

It’s time for you to just stop *believing* in the world – there is a deeper reality available to all of us. To get there, you need to rest in the present moment and try to keep your mind quiet and immovable. Don’t actively think of anything – if a thought intrudes, don’t follow it out. If you don’t give thoughts any attention or structure, they will simply dissolve.

Try not to be self-conscious about what you are doing. Instead, focus on the feeling of empty awareness – your “original mind” free from all content and distractions. Buddhists call this meditative goal the “Beginner’s Mind.”

Continue this mental cycle until your mind is empty and you achieve a state of “pure conscious awareness” – without any objects, desires, thoughts, images, or sensory input in your mind. Once you are completely free of worldly concerns and are no longer chained to your thoughts, you enter the Zero-state beyond mind.

This wordless state is not empty. Indian mystic Sri Aurobindu (1872-1950) referred to it as “Supermind” (literally, “above mind”) – something unexpected there in the silence. He saw the possibility of a divine life on Earth through spiritual evolution connected to the inextricable One consciousness that permeates the universe and is the fabric of our being.⁷⁵

Every moment you can remain in this state, the clearer and stronger your personal mental reality becomes. You are building spiritual integrity – the integration of the clarified remains of your inner “self” with the pregnant silence of the greater monadic Self.

⁷⁵ Aurobindo, Sri. *The Life Divine*, Lotus Press, 1990. P. 132.

You'll know you have achieved the monadic state of mind when you experience a feeling of "No Self." No Self is best understood as the truth of what is still there after the extinction of ego and the realization of the insubstantiality and impermanence of worldly things – the point at which you stop "believing" in the world. It is achieved through the removal of all illusions from consciousness, especially the deep-rooted delusion of "I" – and all the desires, goals, thoughts, and emotions associated with it.

No Self is a state of utter extinction – not of existence but of debilitating egocentric passions and suffering. The light of your "little mind" or "lesser self" is replaced by the light of the greater Mind. It is a state beyond everyday causation and duality that leads to a feeling of infinite spontaneous Being.

As we noted earlier, in Hinduism and Buddhism, this state is called *nirvana*, which literally translates as "blowing out" or "becoming extinguished," as when a flame is blown out or a fire burns itself out. It refers to the extinction of desire, hatred and ignorance, and, ultimately, of all craving and suffering.

Sri Aurobindo described his experience of *nirvana* as a state of, "absolute stillness, inexpressible peace, and a stupendous silence." He said it was a Reality that was "above and without thought." "All is abolished but the mute Alone," he wrote. "Grown inexistent now beyond belief; There is no I, no Nature, no known or unknown." In a letter to a friend, Aurobindu elaborated:

"My experience of *nirvana* came first simply by an absolute stillness and blotting out as it were of all mental, emotional and other inner activities. I did not become aware of any pure 'I' nor even of any self, impersonal or other, there was only an awareness of That as the sole Reality, all else being quite unsubstantial, void, non-real. As to what realized that Reality, it was a nameless consciousness which was not other than That – one could perhaps say this, though hardly even so much as this, since there was no mental concept of it. Mark that I did not think these things – there were no thoughts or concepts – nor did they present themselves like that to any 'Me;' it simply just was so or was self-apparently so."⁷⁶

⁷⁶ Aurobindu, Sri. "Letters on Himself and the Ashram", *The Complete Works of Sri Aurobindu*, Vol. 35. 2011.

4) Continue Meditation in the Pure Light.

The final phase of *Rubedo* requires learning to work in the ultimate silence of the pure light. Generally, the only characteristic of Zero-state consciousness – once you achieve it – is light. The experience begins with and continues in an expanse of warm, brilliant light. This pervasive light is the monadic ground of being – perhaps the pure awareness of the One Mind itself.

The 8th-century *Tibetan Book of the Great Liberation* defined this light as the “self-originated Clear Light, eternally unborn – shining forth also within one’s own mind.” The Sufi poet Abu al-Hosian al-Nuri (840-908 CE) experienced the light repeatedly during meditation: “Gleaming in the Unseen,” he wrote, “I gazed at it continually, until the time came when I had wholly become that light.” He was called *Nuri* (Arabic for “light”) because he was said to radiate glowing light when he talked.

In Christian alchemy, everyone radiates some form of spiritual light, which is the Light of Christ within us that is capable of reflecting the very light of God. Thus, because this light is inside us, it represents our potential to become like God. Christian mystic poet Saint Symeon (949-1022 CE) described that light as “a light infinite and incomprehensible – one single light – simple, non-composite, timeless, eternal; the source of life.”

Metaphysically, the source of all light is the One Mind projecting itself into the darkness of the Abyss. But scientifically speaking, dark is the absence of light. That is, dark and light are not opposing forces – when light enters in, the darkness is no more. Light dispels the darkness. In quantum physics, the alchemy of particle creation begins in a burst of light in the darkness, just like the Big Bang of the whole universe.

Light is also the source of information – divine thoughts or archetypes – carried in our consciousness. In Hermetic terms, it is the dyadic emanation of the “Mind of Nature” or *logos* that brings these “thoughts” to realization in physical form.

In alchemy, light is considered the source of not only physical reality but also metaphysical illumination. While light is the prime symbol of *spiritus*, alchemists are also interested in light that seemed trapped in matter, such as the glowing element phosphorus. They believed there must be a piece of the original light of creation at the heart of all matter, just as it shines so brilliantly in the human mind.

Some alchemists describe the mystical light experienced at this stage of meditation as something they seem to actually see, while others describe it as a pervasive illumination “filling all the senses and experience and being to overflowing – even transcending all those senses.”

How can you tell in the writings of an alchemist if they have experienced this level of meditation and been illuminated by an influx of exalted knowledge? The first clue is that they seem humbled and compassionate. They are also receptive and open to stretching beyond the everyday world and their own egos. Often, they are courageously iconoclastic and go beyond any organized religious or academic dogma. They also recognize spiritual depth in others regardless of their education or religious background.

Light and consciousness seem to be intrinsically bound together. When we perceive something, what we actually experience is an image in the mind. Our brains are constantly interpreting the world and changing input data into coherent impressions and images. The truth is only raw data is really “out there,” and the re-constructed image becomes our reality. When we look out into the world, we are not seeing reality – we are seeing images arising from our Zero-state consciousness.

It is not possible to predict what your experience in the pure light will be like. In general, the experiences can be classified as either Impersonal, Personal, or Transcendent. Impersonal phenomena include an abstract unifying principle or law, a structure or process, or just feeling an unnamed spiritual force. Personal phenomena can be symbolic entities (angels, demons, spirits, or mythic figures) or some kind of revelatory image from your life.

Transcendent experiences in the pure light are active encounters with the greater reality. Alchemists called the type of visual information being received at this point the “True Imagination.” “The True Imagination,” noted Paracelsus, “leads life back to its spiritual reality, and it then takes on the form of silent meditation.”

To enter meditation in the pure light and experience the True Imagination, you have to let yourself be overcome by the light so that it overtakes your entire visual field, so that it envelopes you entirely. The light is bigger than you or anything you possess, but there is nothing to fear – it is only information.

This special kind of purified, monadic imagery that underlies reality reflects the macrocosmic archetypal *logos* of the divine Source (or Monad) being projected into microcosmic consciousness. Meditations that proceed in the pure light are one-pointed efforts to penetrate this mystery. They include visualizations, active imagination, ritualization, and working with iconic images to connect with the archetypal energies of the *logos* or gain insight into the higher levels of reality to transform existing levels of manifestation.

As Paracelsus put it, “In every human being there is a special heaven, whole and unbroken.” That secret, microcosmic “heaven” within us offers the opportunity to emulate the macrocosmic process of creation. “Our thoughts create a new heaven,” summarized Paracelsus, “a new firmament, a new source of energy, from which new arts flow.”

The True Imagination is not some alchemist's fantasy. It is the basis of reality, and unless you know that and can work with it, you are not a true alchemist. Nobel-prize-winning physicist Wolfgang Pauli (1900-1958) understood the nature of the True Imagination through his extensive readings of the works of medieval and Renaissance alchemists.



Figure 513. Photo of Wolfgang Pauli.

But Pauli's interest in alchemy had unleashed a torrent of alchemical images in his dreams, and in 1933, he began a lifelong collaboration with the Swiss psychologist Carl Jung. Jung documented over 400 of Pauli's dreams in *Psychology and Alchemy* (1953).

Pauli had been working to merge mind and matter into one unified theory of the universe which he believed was also the goal of the alchemists. Together with Jung, they formulated a theory (the "Jung-Pauli Conjecture") that unites mind and matter in a single underlying psychophysical reality. The key to their theory was to trace the principles of physics to their archetypal roots. They found that when one analyzes the pre-conscious steps from which these principles emerge, they are revealed not by

logic but through archetypal *images*.

In other words, the foundation of reality is built on images of light not words, and those images are part of the True Imagination of which the alchemists spoke. Pauli eventually called for the creation of an entirely new physics in which the natural laws of matter are treated as the "physical manifestation of pre-existing symbolic images."⁷⁷

"To achieve a true description of Nature," Pauli explained, "it is essential to access the deeper archetypal background of the scientific terms and concepts. When one analyzes the pre-conscious steps to these concepts, one always finds ideas consist of deeply held symbolic images. We have to postulate a new cosmic order of Nature in which material objects are connected to pre-existing inner images. The natural laws of matter would then be revealed as the physical manifestation of their corresponding archetypal images."

⁷⁷ Princeton University later collected and published the discussions between Jung and Pauli in *Atom and Archetype* (1992).

APPENDIX

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Online Resources

Academia Articles: <https://Univie.Academia.edu/DennisHauck>

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Alchemy Conferences: <https://AlchemyConference.net>

Alchemy Elixirs Group: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/alchemical.elixirs>

Alchemy Exhibit: <https://www.rosicrucianpark.org/alchemy-exhibit>

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Alchemy Journal: <https://www.AlchemyJournal.org>

Alchemy Lab: <https://AlchemyLab.com>

Alchemy Links: <https://Alchemergy.org>

Alchemy Museum: <https://www.rosicrucianpark.org/alchemy-museum>

Alchemy Study Group: <https://facebook.com/groups/studyalchemy>

Alchemy Study Program: <https://www.domushermeticus.world/school>

Association for the Scientific Study of Consciousness: <https://theASSC.org>

Center for Consciousness Studies: <https://Consciousness.Arizona.edu/>

Dennis William Hauck: <https://DWHauck.com>

Domus Hermeticus: <https://www.DomusHermeticus.com>

Facebook Group: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/monad.manifesto>

Hauck Resources: <https://1drv.ms/f/s!AtbqIKeml-PxtLA843UjaUCyh28eyw?e=l6YNbi>

Hauck Books: <https://www.Amazon.com/author/hauck>

History of Alchemy: <http://www.chymist.com/History%20Alchemy.pdf>

International Alchemy Guild: <https://www.AlchemyGuild.org>

Monad Resources: <https://MonadManifesto.com>

Podcasts: <https://Alchemergy.podbean.com>

Qualia Research Institute: <https://www.QualiaResearchInstitute.org/>

Spagyricus <https://www.spagyricus.com/>

The Alchemy Website: <https://www.alchemywebsite.com>

YouTube Channel: <https://YouTube.com/user/alchemergist>

About the Author

Dennis William Hauck is an author and researcher in alchemy whose work attempts to merge various philosophical and scientific traditions into a broader science of consciousness. He has contributed to many related areas, including practical and spiritual alchemy, the history of science, psychology, and the serious study of exceptional human experiences.

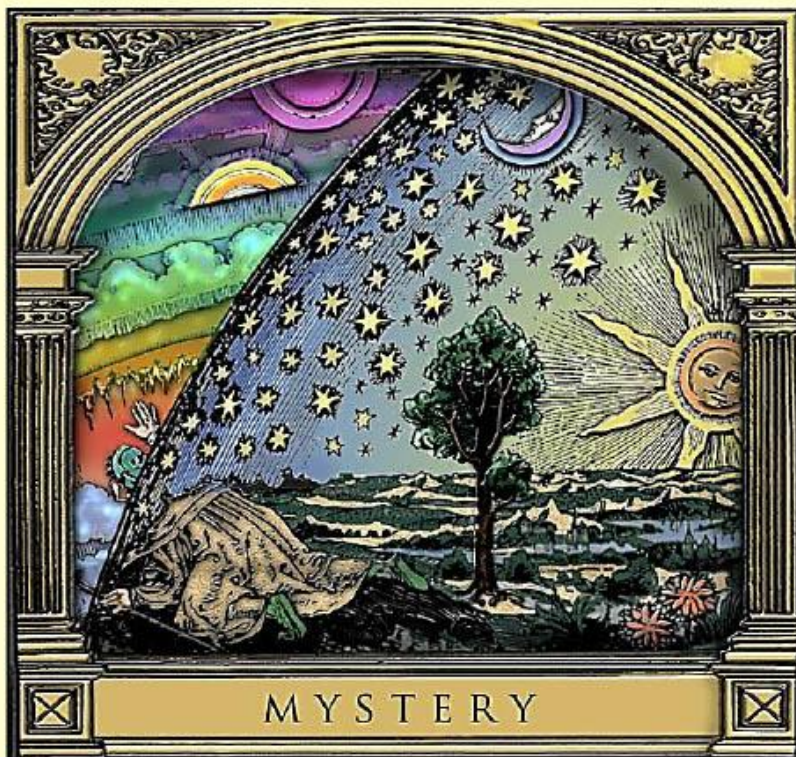
Hauck is the founding president of the International Alchemy Guild and creator of the Alchemy Study Program. He is the founding editor of the *Alchemy Journal* and serves as curator for the Alchemy Museum in San Jose, California. He also worked as director of the International Alchemy Conferences held in the major conference centers of Los Angeles, Long Beach, and Sacramento.

According to Dr. Bernard Lightman in *A Companion to the History of Science* (2019): “Dennis William Hauck is a prolific author and has been at the center of efforts to institutionalize modern alchemy through a number of organizations, conferences, and journals. For Hauck, classical science has its limits, in that it can explain only our physical reality, not the deeper hidden reality from which the physical stems. He decided that alchemy offered one path to that hidden reality, and so, knowing that this path of discredited ‘pseudoscience’ might forever taint his career, Hauck decided it was worth the risk to discover solid evidence and challenge the dominant Newtonian paradigm.”

Hauck has translated a number of German alchemy manuscripts dating back to the fourteenth century and has authored over twenty-five books, including *In the Mind of the Universe: The Monad and You!* (2024), *The Monad Manifesto: Merging Science and Spirituality* (2022), *Alchemy: Energize Your Life by Freeing Your Mind* (2021), *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Alchemy* (2008, 2013, and 2024), *Sorcerer's Stone: A Beginners Guide to Alchemy* (2004), and *The Emerald Tablet: Alchemy for Personal Transformation* (1999).

Hauck has also contributed to a number of anthologies, including *Awaken to a Dream* (1991), *Magic of Our Universe* (1999), *Nine Windows to Wholeness: Jungian Sandplay* (2002), *Get the Picture: Conscious Creation Goes to the Movies* (2007), and *Ceremonial Magick: A Comprehensive Guide to the Western Mystery Tradition* (2020). He is the co-author of *Coction: A Women's Guide to Alchemical Cooking* (2025).

Hauck's books have been featured in *USA Today*, *Wall Street Journal*, *New York Times*, *Chicago Tribune*, *Boston Globe*, *Harper's*, and hundreds of other periodicals, and he has been interviewed on nearly 300 radio and TV programs, including “NPR's Morning Edition,” “CBS This Morning,” “Sally Jessy Raphael,” “Geraldo,” “The O'Reilly Factor,” “Extra,” and “CNN Reports.”



The mystery of the cosmos is something we all sense at some time in our lives. And most of us share the same deep yearning to connect to the energies behind creation and change.

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minds and bodies, and they began to develop a physico-spiritual technology based on the universal principles of transformation.

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Compiled by a leading researcher in the field, this is the first book to document the actual meditations used by alchemists. The author also provides considerable evidence that psycho-spiritual alchemy was practiced many centuries before the Renaissance, contrary to what some modern academics believe.